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Oink!
Oink!
I'm too fat to get to the trough
This little piggy stayed at his second home
These expenses have saved my bacon
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It's the swill of the people

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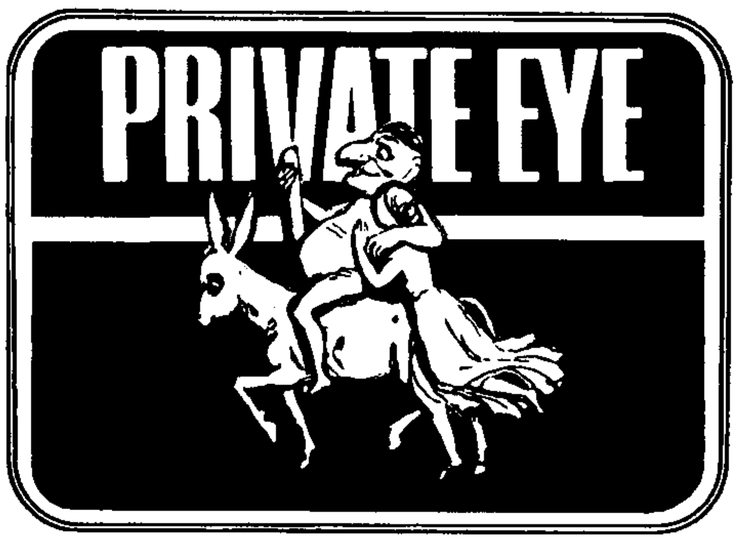

Everybody's darling

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HELLO DOLLY

HURRY, hurry, book your tickets now for a one-day conference on "PR and New Media in Practice" to be held in London on 25 June, which will offer "practical tips and tools" on blogging and social networking.

You'll learn how to "get your tone right and manage crisis appropriately… to ensure your efforts don't end up as a social media horror story".

The panel of "expert speakers" dispensing this valuable advice includes the online editors from the *Telegraph*, the *Times*, Sky News – and, er, Derek "Dolly" Draper, who is billed as the editor of LabourList.org. No mention, alas, of his greater claim to fame as parent of the tragically stillborn RedRag site.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Damian McBride has managed to keep a sensibly low profile since moving with the former chancellor to run the political side of Brown's press operation. He is nowhere near as rough as his predecessor at No 11, [Charlie] Whelan… He is a diplomat, charming when so inclined, as befits a former head of VAT strategy at the Treasury." – **Michael White**, *Guardian*, 4 December 2007.

"It's his first word"

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.
Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705.
Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk
Website: www.private-eye.co.uk

PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
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ABC

WHEN it came to the banks, chancellor Alistair Darling said there would be no separation of standard, lending and deposit-taking banking from investment banking.

The logic was that "narrower banks, such as Northern Rock and London Scottish in the UK, have experienced difficulties as well as broad banks, such as RBS". This is true; but it misses the crucial point that it was the movement of banks like RBS, and many in the US, into investment banking that created the appetite for the billions in securitized mortgages, to be funded on the money markets, that got the Wreck and others into so much trouble.

And in a line that could only have come from one of the many bankers advising Darling to try to put Humpty together again, his budget report stated that "broader and larger banks allow for stronger connections between the banking sector and capital markets, potentially benefiting market efficiency". Or – somewhat more than "potentially" – screwing everything up. The fact that big, broad banks also allow bankers to make serious money is incidental.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

10 Years of New Labour boom

10 Years of bust before public finances return to balance (even on Alistair Darling's "fantasy" figures)

ASKED by *Channel 4 News* to discuss the death of Ian Tomlinson during the G20 summit in London, Ken Livingstone was quick to condemn the police actions and referred to an incident 30 years ago in which teacher and anti-racist campaigner Blair Peach was killed, allegedly as a result of police brutality.

But he omitted to mention another incident which took place more recently, when police were condemned for their treatment of protesters and use of the so-called "kettle" tactic: the 2001 May Day demonstration in London. Thousands of demonstrators and innocent passers-by were hemmed into Oxford Circus for up to eight hours without food, water or shelter; young girls were coshed for asking to use a toilet; one elderly gentleman with diabetes who collapsed was given a cup of tea by officers and then thrown back into the crowd; and tourists with plane tickets weren't allowed to leave, missing their flights. All the protesters had their photos taken before being let out.

Livingstone's failure to recall that very similar demonstration is perhaps understandable. He was then London mayor, and went on record at the time to applaud the police actions.

"The decision to contain the protesters," he declared, "was right."

STALINIST QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I take full responsibility for what happened. That's why the person who was responsible went immediately." – Gordon Brown on Labour's email smear scandal

SEVEN years ago, Inspector Knacker promised that London cops would be the first to wear name badges to make them more "accessible" – although it seems the Police Federation, the rank-and-file union, was against the idea.

Those with unusual names, such as Pratt or Dick, it was said, would be subject to ridicule. Unfortunately officers' reasons for now not only refusing to give their names but also to hide their identification numbers appear far more sinister.

But why did it take a shocking death during the G20 demonstration and embarrassment in the media before the higher ranks acted to enforce the rule? Could it by any chance be because those ranked inspector or above do not have to display their names or numbers themselves?

GURKHA TRIFLES

ONE of the very few prepared to defend the government's decision to make it virtually impossible for most of the Gurkhas who have fought for Britain to settle here is Lord Edwin Bramall, a former chief of the defence staff and a colonel with the Gurkha Rifles, 1976–1986.

Writing in the *Independent on Sunday*, he argued: "Don't be sentimental. We have treated the Gurkhas well." The "we" is interesting.

"In common with anyone who has ever served with the Gurkhas, I think they are marvellous," he wrote, before rather giving the game away: "Apart from their outstanding abilities in the field, for a long time the Gurkhas, to put it at its baldest, offered the British government another advantage: they cost less than their British counterparts."

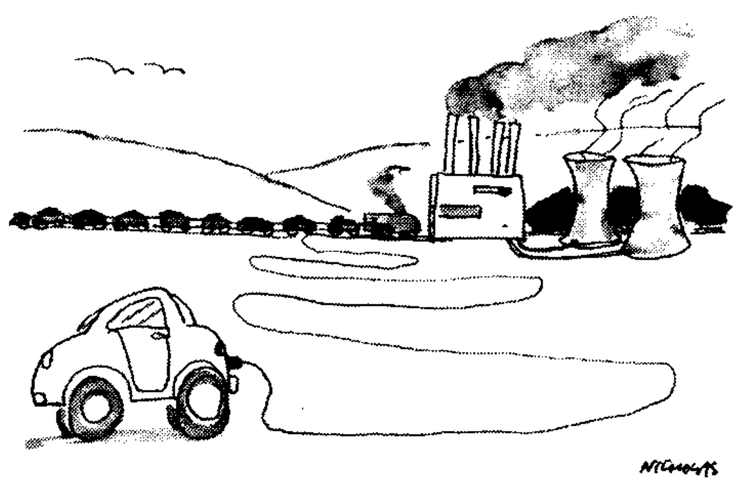
The Ministry of Defence will deny the charge, but the evidence shows that the Gurkhas have always been seen as a cheaper option when deployed on operations. Back in 1999, for example, Seargeant Balaram Rai, a Gurkha, was killed alongside his British-born commander while clearing unexploded NATO bombs in Kosovo.

The MoD gave his widow a lump sum as compensation. She received just under £20,000. A non-Gurkha of equivalent rank and length of service would receive £54,000. Mrs Rai also received a pension, but only for £939.24 a year for the first five years, followed by £771.48 a year after that. That's just 7.5 percent of the £15,192 pension the widow of an equivalent British soldier would receive.

Lord Bramall himself has often championed the "value for money" Gurkhas in the House of Lords. Also in 1999, when the future of Hong Kong was under discussion, he urged the government "to make more use of the Brigade of Gurkhas, behind whom there is an almost inexhaustible and immediate supply of first-class, trainable soldiers whose forefathers have loyally served the British Crown for over 180 years".

It remains to be seen how long that inexhaustible supply of Gurkhas continues given their shoddy treatment by the government and the MoD. On the Gurkha memorial to the dead outside the MoD, a plaque reads: "Bravest of the brave, most generous of the generous, never had a country more faithful friends than you." Perhaps the phrase "and they save us an awful lot of money to boot" should be added too.

'Squarebasher'



Street of Shame

MAX CLIFFORD must have thought Christmas had come early when he snapped up the late Jade Goody. And he clearly bargained on making a few more bob out of her jailed squeeze Jack Tweed.

But he reckoned without Ben Procter, a former *People* deputy editor turned PR guru, who happens to be an old chum of the Essex bruiser. When Clifford saw pictures of the two men out drinking, he rang Tweed in a fury. "Do not fucking speak to anybody but me," he demanded.

Not perhaps the best way to handle the hot-tempered Tweed. He has now taken on Procter instead.

"SECRET police intelligence was given to private firm," screamed the main headline on the *Guardian*'s front page on 20 April. "Emails show civil servants passed data on protestors to security officials at E.ON."

The *Grauniad* was appalled that Scotland Yard and Whitehall had shared information with the energy giant about environmentalists who objected to its new power station in Kent. As Shami Chakrabarti of Liberty told the paper: "The government is in danger of turning police constables into little more than bouncers and private security guards for big business."

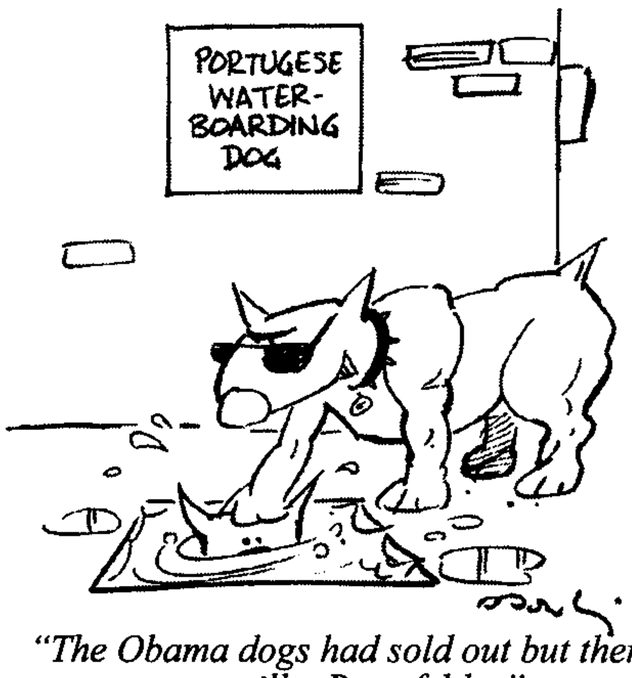
No doubt this will be carefully noted by the newspaper's own executives who are organising the *Guardian* Climate Change Summit 2009, to be held in central London on 15 June, which is receiving generous sponsorship from… E.ON.

AT LAST a successor has been found to Paul "tax havens" Myners as chairman of the Guardian Media Group.

Until a couple of weeks ago the favoured candidate was John Peace of Standard Chartered; but then the *Eye* drew attention to his bank's tireless efforts to satisfy clients' "offshore financial needs". So Amelia Fawcett, former Morgan Stanley banker, has got the job instead. The *Grauniad* can resume its high-minded campaign against tax havens with a clear conscience.

But wait a minute: Fawcett is also a non-executive director of US financial firm State Street, which cheerfully admits on its website that "our approach to offshore fund servicing is simple. We provide our clients with consultative experience that is unrivalled in the industry, then back it up with a complete array of products and quality service to help you complete even the most complex offshore transactions."

All a bit embarrassing for editor Alan Rusbridger, no doubt. But very reassuring for private equity firm Apax, which has set up a string of offshore companies with Guardian Media Group in the tax havens of Luxembourg and the Cayman Islands.



"The Obama dogs had sold out but there was still a Rumsfeld..."

MORE great strides forward in Fleet Street's technological revolution last week.

Firstly the *Telegraph*'s attempt to harvest the unmediated thoughts of Twitter users on the Budget via something called a "Twitterfall" resulted in a flood of messages like "*Telegraph* wankers", "Even the *Indie* is better than this drivel" and "Will Lewis smells of old man's pants" being prominently displayed on the website.

Bloggers on the *Guardian*'s website gleefully documented the episode, and hacks even managed to take time out from generating "wordles" of Alistair Darling's speech (which helpfully demonstrate what it would have looked like if he'd written all the words in pretty colours and the wrong order) to write a brief report for something called their newspaper.

Then came the inevitable community interaction, as the *Telegraph*'s assistant editor Justin Williams – the man who has previously hailed columnist Bryony Gordon as one of his paper's "intellectual big beasts" – took to his own Twitter account to debate the nature of his trade with Charles Arthur, technology editor of the *Guardian*: "Have enjoyed attempt to orchestrate snipe campaign. Nice example of 'good journalism'."

"OK, Justin, just explain to us tweet-style the journalistic benefits that the Budget twitterfall brings. I'm all ears," replied the *Grauniad*'s man at the cutting-edge.

Back came the response from the office of Britain's last remaining broadsheet: "I'm astonished at the arrogance, hubris and all-round cuntishness of *Guardian* journalists. @ charlesarthur, for instance."

IN HIS weekly *Times* feature on lost words, Philip Howard introduces readers to the verb "gove": "To stare stupidly. Of (obscure) northern origin… As in: Stop goving at me like a loony, boy, and construe."

Might he by any chance be thinking of his fellow *Times* columnist and shadow education secretary, Michael "Oiky" Gove? Surely not!

ONE of the few hacks left at the *Indie* after the latest purge, columnist Deborah Orr, is determined to be the first victim of the next cull, to judge by her public rubbishing of editor Roger Alton in a letter to actor and blogger David Benson, who had written to her complaining about the *Indie*'s coverage of the G20 protests.

"I'm afraid I share your feelings," Orr replied, "and don't agree at all with the way the newspaper's editor has treated the story." Alton, she explains, "just decided that the media was hyping up the protest/riot stuff too much, decided to err on the side of caution, and ended up literally and totally ERRING on the side of caution."

Since the latest round of redundancies, she adds, *Indie* hacks have been utterly demoralised as they try to work out "what sort of unique contribution we can make at all. The protest coverage probably just confirms that the answer is: none. Ah well, it was good when it was good…"

HAPPY times at the *Sunday Times*, where reporter Abul Taher has filed an official complaint about notoriously obnoxious news editor Nicholas Hellen after tiring of being referred to as a "suicide bomber" in front of colleagues, several of whom have now come forward to offer their own examples of Hellenic bullying.

Hellen has, it seems, failed to learn from the 2006 incident when he was bodily ejected from a minicab by its Asian driver after jocularly inquiring if he was either an illegal immigrant or a terrorist – an incident which earned Hellen what colleagues describe as a "bawling-out" from deputy managing editor Kathleen Herron at the time.

DESPITE all the change and decay in the Street of Shame, one ancient tradition endures – the *Sun*'s habit of rubbishing stories from the *News of the Screws*, its stablemate.

The latest splendid example was the *Screws* front-page splash of 19 April, when Mazher "Fake Sheikh" Mahmood reported that one of the child stars of *Slumdog Millionaire* was being put up for sale by her father for £200,000. "Surely Slum Mistake," quipped the *Sun* the next day, with a strong denial from the actress's family that they had tried to sell the girl and a heavy hint that the fake sheikh had tried to lead the family on: "A source close to the family said they were contacted by the wealthy man offering money for Rubina's acting skills."

Rebekah Wade likes to expose flaws in *Screws* stories because it makes her own paper look better for it – but now she has a further incentive. Since her boss James Murdoch, the Digger's heir-apparent, is expected to move soon from London to New York to be with his old man, Wade is even keener to shine – as she is lobbying the Dirty Digger to make her the next boss of News International in Britain.

RED FACES at the *Daily Mail* after it published a picture of serial football groupie Danielle Lloyd (*Who she? Ed)* leaving a nightclub with her latest gentleman friend. "He's no footballer, but WAG Danielle scores herself a new mystery man," quipped the *Mail.*

Whoops! The new mystery man was Jamie O'Hara – who, when he isn't escorting bimbos out of nightclubs, earns a living playing for Tottenham Hotspur. A football team, m'lud.

MIRROR Group boss Mark Hollinshead's regular long-distance commutes (see last *Eye*) are the least of his worries. Last week striking hacks at the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* passed a motion of no confidence in Hollinshead and his human resources director, Lesley "Lily Savage" Sommerville.

Clinging together in adversity is becoming a habit for this despised duo. At the *Sunday Mail*'s annual sports awards in Glasgow's Hilton Hotel, just before Christmas, anxious colleagues summoned a cab for their stunningly tired and emotional MD – only for him to reappear at the ceremony five minutes later. As Hollinshead lurched forward, "Lily Savage" tried to hold him up – but she fell backwards and Hollinshead's dead weight sent them both crashing on to a glass-topped table. Result: ambulance and eight stitches for Sommerville. "Her blood was everywhere," one amazed reveller observed.

The next morning a frantic Hollinshead rang round his fellow Scottish newspaper MDs and begged them to suppress the story, which they duly did. *Herald* boss Tim Blott gleefully told his fellow-execs: "That's a big favour Mark owes me!" But how long will Mark and Lesley be in a position to repay it?

"DO WE really need to know the gruesome ins and outs of celebrity divorce cases?" demanded India Knight in the *Sunday Times* last weekend.

"Splashing it about and sharing it with anyone who happens to be within earshot is not adult behaviour. It is, to use an appropriately old-fashioned word, undignified. Although I gawped at the Mills and McCartney divorce reports with as much prurient glee as everyone else, my overwhelming emotion was horror that the intimate, painful business of two adults' failed relationship was being picked over, joked about and gossiped about by anyone who cared to have a look."

She is presumably unrelated to the India Knight who chronicled the end of her own marriage in intimate detail in a weekly column entitled "Navel Gazing" in the *Observer* in 1998-1999, defending it on the grounds of "the irrefutable fact that my marriage breaking up made a good story".

HACKWATCH

Blog standard

CONGRATULATIONS to blogger Paul Staines on his spectacular scoop with the McBride/Draper emails. Congratulations too for his belated realisation of the superiority of the "dead tree press" in choosing to print not a word from them on his own "Guido Fawkes" website and hand them over instead to the *Sunday Times* and *News of the World*.

That allowed Rupert Murdoch's lawyers to take on the legal risks and potential costs over which the fearless Fawkes had been fretting for some time, as well as allowing for the addition of a good dose of the hypocrisy and humbug against which his blog is dedicated.

The *Sunday Times* and *News of the World* duly put on a splendid show of high-minded disgust.

"Any bit of rumour or tittle-tattle was apparently fair game for Mr McBride, the more embarrassing the better," the *Sunday Times* sermonised. "He will not be missed. But the culture in which he operated survives him. If the prime minister wants to remove the poison from British politics, he has to ensure he has eradicated it from Downing Street."

The paper hasn't always regarded this poison as too toxic for its own consumption. As the *Guardian* revealed last week, McBride was fingered as the man responsible in 2004 for taking out of context comments from senior civil servants at a confidential seminar and leaking them to the *Sunday Times*, with the purpose of showing Tony Blair in a bad light.

Meanwhile, the easily shockable *Screws* thought the emails "vicious and vile". It was appalled by McBride's claims that George Osborne "knows the most embarrassing photos from his past have yet to emerge", and that it might be fun to spread rumours about his family. "This is merely part of an absurd smear campaign to divert attention from the issues that matter," said Osborne, "and I am confident that people will not be distracted by this rubbish."

Actually, that was Osborne speaking in 2005, after the *Screws* published photos of him with a prostitute, Natalie Rowe, and, it alleged, drugs in the same shot. Despite the fact that this story has since been removed from the paper's website at the behest of lawyers, the *Screws* seems to have an even bigger fixation than McBride about the Osborne family and prostitutes.

Last October, it returned to Rowe, who obligingly recalled how she had let Osborne and friends watch an S&M session with one of her clients: "None of them hid the fact they liked it and they weren't embarrassed. They were turned on by it." It has also published stories about a relationship between Osborne's brother and a prostitute for no other reason than that he is related to the shadow chancellor.

Perhaps the most appalling smear was the false rumour that David Cameron suffers from an embarrassing health problem," gasped the *Screws*. "We have decided not to disclose the nature of it."

This came a mere month after the paper taunted a "certain Premiership star" whom it accused of having made "a secret after-hours visit to an STD clinic so your lovely and unsuspecting girlfriend would never know. But did you really think The Snitch [the paper's gossip columnist] wouldn't find out?"

Writing for the *Times* a few days later, Staines declared himself "aghast at the sheer jaw-dropping viciousness of the unexpurgated smears" McBride was prepared to circulate.

"Reading them was like the first time you see hardcore pornography – revolting and intriguing at the same time."

Anyone wishing to experience a similar reaction should simply hasten to Staines's blog entry of 30 November 2006, where he records that day's announcement of four-month-old Fraser Brown's diagnosis with cystic fibrosis and allows his followers to have their say. Their comments – still displayed by Staines two and a half years later – include genuinely jaw-dropping comments about the son's illness, his paternity and his father's sexuality. These make McBride's smears look almost gentle and show the blogosphere in typically unhinged and rancid mode.

"I can't stop putting the word 'gate' after everything I write... gate"

RUSSELL BRAND'S answerphone messages to Andrew Sachs last October were, the *Sun* declared, "a childish act of verbal violence", a "vile, obscene" act of "unforgivable smut" by a "serial offender".

So how did the paper react to Brand's return to the nation's airwaves last week in a guest appearance on TalkSport? "Russell Brand is back to his best on the radio," frothed one of the paper's top hacks on 20 April. "It has been six months since Russ handed in his notice at Radio 2 after the Sachsgate scandal. But he showed just what the airwaves have been missing… They should make it a regular gig. It would be the best show on the airwaves. Radio 1 should offer him megabucks to replace Chris Moyles on the breakfast show."

Why the turnaround? Because Brand had agreed – despite not appearing very happy about the prospect – to become one of the very small group of celebrities willing to be photographed with his arm round the paper's priapic showbusiness editor, Gordon Smart.

TRYING times at *Press Gazette*, whose demise was announced just after the traditionally liquid British press awards – only for the magazine to be seemingly rescued last week by Progressive Media, the group run by *New Statesman* owner Mike Danson.

At the annual awards dinner one of the winners was the *Mail on Sunday*'s tireless Chris Leake, a Lunchtime O'Booze of the old school, who got well stuck into the free vino and was barely able to stand by the end of the night. Asked for comment by a *Press Gazette* reporter, Leake burped up something totally unprintable.

Mail on Sunday political editor Simon Walters, seeing what was happening, came to the rescue of his friend and colleague and gave the *Gazette* scribe a quotation: "Leake is an object lesson to us all." This was duly reported the next day on the *Gazette* website as "Leake is an abject lesson to us all."

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£9bn "Efficiency savings" proposed by Alistair Darling in government spending

£2bn Amount government is still spending on project to record all emails, phone calls and internet use

£5bn Amount government is still spending on launch of ID cards

Boyleballs

"A word of caution. Susan Boyle deserves far better than to be treated as a dowdy simpleton… the frumpster who says she's never been kissed… a Lothian lady with a cat called Pebbles… a range of emotional experience Susan can never have known in her shy, churchgoing life…"

– Allison Pearson, Daily Mail, *22 April*

"For goodness sake, Amanda, stop talking about Susan as if she is retarded instead of a talented, if somewhat plain, virgin. I say, go for it, Susan. Get the full Demi Moore body surgery, love."

– Lauren Booth, Mail on Sunday, *19 April*

"What will become of Boyle? I can't help worrying about it. Will this whirlwind of publicity – to which I am contributing even now – have made her any happier?… the pathos of this woman is more than I can bear to think about. So I won't. Instead, I'll neurotically glue myself to the television every Saturday night until the final… It is my duty to be on constant Susan-watch, checking, hoping and praying that nobody manages to knock her off the star-spangled perch we've put her on."

– Becky Pugh, Telegraph, *22 April*

"If there is a lesson from her success for politicians, it is authenticity. It is the only communication that works."

– Alastair Campbell, blog entry, 19 April

"Gordon Brown was quizzed about Susan Boyle – by the ex-Secretary General of the United Nations. Kofi Annan asked the PM for the lowdown on the telly Socttish [*sic*] singing sensation after delivering a speech at the Adam Smith College in Kirkaldy… Mr Brown looked deep in thought as he told Susan's remarkable story to one of the world's most powerful men."

– Daily Record, *25 April*

She had real authority. Authority is a strange word to use in this context, but that is what I saw when I watched her on YouTube… It has reminded me bizarrely of the way the Gospels speak of Jesus. On the one hand they claim he had an authority which was utterly convincing. Yet at the same time he is identified with the broken figure from the book of Isaiah. One with no beauty that we should desire, despised and rejected of men, one from whom men hide their faces."

– Reverend Angela Tilby, Thought for the Day, *Radio 4, 23 April*

"The agony behind Susan Boyle's success: Close friends plead with media to back off.

Click here to see our Susan Boyle photo gallery

Exclusive: How opportunity 'Knocked' for Susan

Has Susan Boyle had her 15 minutes of fame? Vote now in our poll!"

– Irish Voice, *22 April*

"Simon Cowell has launched an astonishing attack on Susan Boyle, warning that she risks turning herself into a 'gimmick'. He told the cat-loving virgin to focus on her singing – or risk wrecking her chances of super-stardom."

– Sunday People, *26 April*

"Susan Boyle has put a smile on the face of the world in gloomy times. Britain has a talent for turning underdogs into heroes. But we also have an unpleasant knack for knocking them down just as quickly. For once, let's spare her the backlash."

– Mark Austin, Sunday Mirror, *26 April, p.14*

"SUSAN IS CRACKING UP, SAYS BROTHER"

– Sunday Mirror, *26 April, p.5*

Always The McBridesmaid, Never The McBride

IT WAS as long ago as December 2006 that Lord Campbell-Savours first tabled a parliamentary question about the antics of Damian McBride, then Gordon Brown's special adviser at the Treasury, who had just lambasted Sky News for allowing the Blairite Stephen Byers to comment on Gordon Brown's pre-budget report. ("Out of interest," McBride asked sarkily, "who do you have on for Labour?")

Campbell-Savours, an austere old Labourite, was appalled: special advisers, as civil servants, are meant to keep out of intra-party feuding and mud-wrestling. He asked ministers "whether the contents of the email sent by special adviser Damian McBride to Sky television complied with paragraph 14 of the code of conduct for special advisers, and, if not, what action they will take".

On behalf of the government, Lord McKenzie replied that "all Treasury members of staff are expected to follow the relevant codes of conduct for their employment, whether they are special advisers or civil servants, but we do not discuss individual cases". Campbell-Savours repeated his question again in January 2007, and yet again in March, but on both occasions was fobbed off with the same mantra: "We do not discuss individual cases."

Fast forward to April 2009. When McBride's scurrilous emails were exposed, the PM and his fellow-ministers rushed to the nearest microphone to express their revulsion and to point out that McPoison had been dismissed at once. Whatever happened to the stern refusal to discuss individual cases?

Like so many political "rules", this turns out to apply only when ministers find it expedient, as they did in December 2006. Gordon knew by then what sort of chap McBride was – a red-faced lout plotting to undermine Blairites in blithe defiance of Whitehall codes of conduct. But, as Peter Sellers used to say, he felt that "one must have such a man". Nobody paid much attention to Campbell-Savours' lone campaign, and Gordon was able to enter No 10 with his henchman at his side. For all his recent protestations of ignorance, the thuggishness he now deplores was the very quality that he valued in McBride.

Much of the outrage from Fleet Street hacks is equally disingenuous. Despite all their choirboy disgust, McBride was as much the recipient of lobby hacks' gossip as its originator. Political insiders knew that the McBride email published by blogger Guido Fawkes was genuine as soon as they saw he had hailed Derek Draper et al as "Gents". This sort of sub-golf-club chumminess was very much McBride's style. Few of his "clients" – the lobby hacks he spoonfed – were women. He is the sort of man who addresses drinking partners as "squire" and, on being offered a tincture, utters the witticism "foolish not to".

In Moncrieff's press bar at the Commons, McBride's lewd email theory about a female Tory MP was old hat. Unverified scuttlebutt has long been exchanged by press bar drinkers while Clive the barman innocently dries the glasses and struggles to keep the white wine shelves stocked during the daily depredations from the Press Association, Sky News, the *Sun* and certain regional newspapers ("make it the usual, Clive").

McBride's best pals in the lobby, apart from *Daily Mirror* columnist Kevin Maguire, were Patrick Hennessy of the *Sunday Telegraph*, Andrew Porter of the *Daily Telegraph*, George Pascoe Watson of the *Sun* and Ben Brogan, until recently of the *Daily Mail* but now chief political commentator on the *Daily Telegraph*. McBride's tactic was to appeal to Thatcherite newspaper readers dissatisfied by David Cameron's liberal tone.

Left-wing Etonian Hennessy and wet-behind-the-ears Porter are part of a beer, golf and football cabal in the press lobby set. They spend more time discussing Chelsea and Arsenal scores, or how wellied they got the previous night, than chewing over political philosophy. They regard earnest Blairites as "tossers" and Cameroon Tories as "toffs". Management at the *Mirror* clearly had a shrewd idea of what Maguire was up to with his mate Damian: the weekly column in which he did much of McBride's dirty work was titled "Kevin Maguire and Friends". The readers seem to have twigged as well. "Just what is the truth of Cameron's alleged embarrassing complaint of a highly personal nature?" he mused on his blog last week, prompting one reader to reply: "Whatever the complaint in question, let's hope it's not the one that you've been suffering from for the past three years, Kevin. Having his head wedged inextricably up his own arse."

Those outside McBride's gang of chums included the dry New Labour couple of *Grauniad* political editor Patrick Wintour and his wife Rachel Sylvester, now a columnist on the *Times* but previously on the *Telegraph*. There was surprise last year when Sylvester left the *Torygraph*, having been there all her career. Naïve onlookers thought *Telegraph* editor Will "Thirsty" Lewis might have fought hard to hold on to such a big name writer, particularly one who wrote well-informed, largely critical pieces about Brown. But Lewis is also a karaoke-singing chum of Damian McBride. The Downing Street spinner, who was seen lounging in Lewis's office, has a capacity for drink almost equal to that of "Thirsty". Exit Sylvester. Lewis had now changed the entire *Telegraph* political team, including straight-as-an-arrow George Jones. McBride must have been delighted. The last paper to remain loyal to McBride, even after his email surfaced? Lewis's *Telegraph*.

The McBride media operation was not always carried out by him or at his behest. Ed Balls sometimes pulled the strings. Junior ministers such as Tom Watson, plus union schemer and ex-Treasury spin doctor Charlie Whelan, occasionally passed nuggets to trusted scribes. The involvement of Draper suggests that Peter Mandelson (Draper's longstanding controller) has also had one of his long, lean digits in the pie. Mandelson could not bear being in the same room as the oafish McBride so Draper was detailed to meet the Brown/Balls crowd at the sleaze frontier on his behalf.

McBride's mitt was not on the smoking revolver last summer when David Miliband was done in after making a clumsy bid to succeed Gordon Brown. Miliband was described as "shitty" by a 10 Downing Street figure. Those keen to identify that person could do worse than study the telephone records of another McBride operative, former Treasury special adviser Ian Austin MP.

McBride, who is only in his mid 30s (though he looks older) has not left Downing Street a rich man. He needs a job, fast, if only to allay fears he might spill the beans on how Brown's No 10 works. There is evidence he feels betrayed by the way Ed Balls disowned him with indecent haste after the email story broke. Last autumn Ben Brogan rode to McBride's defence when Mandelson returned to the government and McBride was demoted after dumping on Ruth Kelly in a 3am briefing at the Labour conference. Brogan wrote in his *Mail* blog that "when the Day of Reckoning comes, Damian McBride will emerge with great credit from this madness". Following Balls's disowning of McBride, Brogan used his new *Torygraph* blog to call Balls a liar.

And what, finally, of Kevin Maguire? His presence at a meeting with Draper, McBride and Labour party chairman Ray Collins to discuss a leftwing scandal blog, Red Rag, may have damaged his lucrative sideline as a politics pundit for the BBC. Shortly after quitting, McBride received an urgent message from a certain "gent" of political journalism desperately asking him if there were any other unexploded emails which might betray him as a Labour stooge. In reply McBride replied: "What do you mean? Half of them were your ideas in the first place!"

'Gavel Basher and Friends'

DROPPING A DOLLY

● "I'm probably on safe ground in guessing that you, or someone you know, needs help understanding or coping with something that is going on right now. If that is the case then I am sorry you or they are struggling. I don't know how I could help yet." – *From **Derek "Dolly" Draper**'s psychotherapy website, derekdraper.net.*

● "Tonight we've been on a rare night out to the cool new London club Shoreditch House. We were having a drink with Gordon Brown's press supremo Damian McBride. He has all the skill of Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell without the baggage." – ***Derek Draper**, "Diary of a* Strictly Come Dancing *Widower"*, Mail on Sunday, *28 October 2007.*

● "Are we prisoners of our past? Or free agents, able to blithely reinvent ourselves and embrace tomorrow's bright new dawn? Philosophers, theologists and psychologists have wrestled with these issues for millennia, and there are no easy answers. The truth is, surely, that we are a mix: partly the creatures of our past experiences, but also able to learn from these and move on… By my late 20s, I had turned into a pretty emotionless hedonist, partying a lot, taking drugs and seemingly incapable of fidelity. I am today, in those respects, a different person… Crucially, what has altered fundamentally is my ability to empathise. I take others into account now in a way I never did before: that alone transforms my behaviour. I may be tempted to behave a certain way, but I easily resist. Other things matter more." – ***Derek Draper**,* Observer, *8 March, less than two months after privately praising Damian McBride's smear-stories as "absolutely totally brilliant".*

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

WHILE MEPs are keen to pocket their £172 daily attendance allowance for turning up at the European parliament, what they actually do when they are there remains highly questionable.

Very few of the 785 MEPs attended parliamentary sessions full time, and some not even half the time, according to research published last week by Flavien Deltort, former assistant to Italian MEP Marco Cappato. How many still see the attendance allowance as just a "siso" fee – cash for "signing in and sodding off" remains unclear.

After studying attendance reports and tabled questions between 2004 and 2008, Deltort found that only nine MEPs attended full time in plenary sessions while only two Austrian MEPs, Hans-Peter Martin and Paul Rubig, fully attended committees.

After Deltort's revelations were published on Cappato's *website, parlorama.eu*, MEPs responded in the time-honoured fashion – by threatening to sue Deltort for tarnishing parliament's image!

There is nothing new in MEPs ripping off taxpayers with their expenses claims, nor in whistleblowers getting it in the neck. In 2004 Hans-Peter Martin documented 7,200 cases of MEPs falsely claiming allowances. He was later sacked from the Socialist party and had to set up his own party. A German TV crew which tried to film MEPs signing in and sauntering off was then thrown out of the parliament building and MEPs later voted to ban the media from the area.

Last year whistleblowing Dutch Green MEP Paul van Buitenen found more evidence of attendance misuse with MEPs' signatures even being faked by their assistants and fake meetings being set up.

MEANWHILE officials in the European Commission have finally acknowledged that whistleblower Robert McCoy was invalided out of his job as an auditor with the EU's Committee of the Regions thanks to harassment by his bosses (see *Eyes passim*).

An investigation by the commission found that "professional [ie work-related] causes" lay behind Mr McCoy's fall from grace. However, despite this criticism of one EU body by another, after so many years of official foot-dragging it is of little consolation to Mr McCoy, who remains at home unable to work and unsure whether he will ever be compensated for his years in limbo.

Mr McCoy's torment started in 2003 because he did his job properly: exposing bogus travel claims and other financial mis-doings by 222 members of the Committee of the Regions. However, as the "bearer of bad news", he was himself "pressurized" by his managers. According to the European Commission's staff union, the *Union Syndicale,* they tried to restrict his "independence as internal auditor". They were also guilty of "mobbing" Mr McCoy and "other acts of intimidation".

Olaf, the EU's less than perfect crime investigation branch, confirmed Mr McCoy's reports and said the committee had indeed been involved in "systematic and flagrant incompetence" with respect to "the essential rules of tendering procedures and financial management". In 2004, the European parliament even demanded that the committee make a formal apology to Mr McCoy. But it never did and Mr McCoy, though vindicated, was formally put out to grass on health grounds.

EU-phemisms

Lightweights

THE CROWNED CLOWN

OUR bowler-hatted chum Viscount Monckton of Brenchley, Sudoku compiler and sometime policy adviser to Margaret Thatcher, has saddled up his favourite hobby-horse and rejoined the battle against the notion that humans have any role in climate change.

This time he has taken the struggle to Washington DC, with a submission to two US congressmen on the House energy and commerce committee providing "justification and verification" of his claim that global warming is a myth.

The science may seem a bit flimsy, but Christopher Monckton gives it a veneer of authority by adding a logo above each of the graphs – a portcullis topped with a crown, which bears a striking resemblance to the insignia of the Houses of Parliament. Shome mishtake, shurely? As the official parliamentary guide points out, "the usage of the crowned portcullis was formally authorised by Her Majesty the Queen for the two Houses unambiguously to use the device and thus to regulate its use by others. The emblem should not be used for purposes to which such authentication is inappropriate, or where there is a risk that its use might wrongly be regarded, or represented as having the authority of the House".

Perhaps Monckton thinks he is entitled to use the symbol, as in a previous letter to two American senators he described himself as "a member of the Upper House of the United Kingdom legislature". But, er, he's nothing of the sort. His late father, the second viscount, put himself forward at the 1999 Lords election in which the hereditaries chose which 92 of them should survive the Blairite cull. However, despite an eye-catching manifesto ("All cats to be muzzled outside to stop the agonising torture of mice and small birds"), he didn't make the cut.

Since inheriting the title, Christopher has stood at a "by-election" for a hereditary Tory seat in the Lords, following the death of Lord Mowbray and Stourton two years ago. He received precisely zero votes.

TROUBLE IN STORES

BURIED in the Treasury's 90-page "operational efficiency" report the day before the Budget was news that crucial public services are to be flogged off to raise a few pennies towards filling the trillion-plus hole in the exchequer.

With help from the bankers running the government's Shareholder Executive, the man charged with extracting money from "asset management and sales" has devised a privatisation and commercialization plan. Among the conclusions of Gerry Grimstone (see last *Eye*), chairman of collapsed private equity group Candover, are: much of the Land Registry's work should be outsourced; the "ownership structure" of the Met Office should be improved; the MoD should look at a "potential role for the private sector in the future financing operation or ownership" of the government's Oil and Pipelines Agency, the body that runs the fuel network supplying the military; "the introduction of private capital into the Royal Mint", ie privatisation; and a more "customer-focused and commercially driven" Ordnance Survey. Watch out for McDonald's golden arches on OS maps!

Most controversially, given the failure in recent years to keep the military properly supplied, is the private equity man's decision that "alternative methods of ownership should be considered for the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency". Grimstone and the MoD have already brought in one change to DSDA: a "shadow internal charging system" that bears the hallmarks of a consultancy-driven overhaul teeing up a public service for privatisation.

Last month a National Audit Office report revealed how a similar move – the creation of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency in 2000 – left one part of the MoD not knowing what another was doing. The MoD "found it difficult to reconcile effectively its roles as owner of DARA, where it had to support the business, and its role as principal purchaser of military aircraft repair services".

The upshot was £113m wasted on a white elephant of a redundant aircraft super-hangar (*Eyes passim*).

IN LEHMANS TERMS

SHADOW chancellor George Osborne attacked the government last month for not foreseeing the collapse of Scottish building society Dunfermline.

Osborne pressed Alistair Darling across the despatch box, demanding: "When was the FSA first aware that **Dunfermline** was purchasing UK buy-to-let mortgages from the likes of Lehman Brothers and GMAC, and increasing its exposure to commercial property by £500m — an increase of more than 400 percent?"

Osborne was furiously convinced that Dunfermline's deals with Lehmans were a bad idea, asking: "Were any doubts ever expressed or any questions ever raised or any warnings ever issued — and if not, why not?" He insisted the chancellor should "instruct the FSA to publish a full account of its dealings with Dunfermline".

If Osborne really wants to know about Lehmans destroying Dunfermline, he could simply ask Christopher Gent, a Lehmans director when all the dodgy Dunfermline deals were made. After all, Osborne and Gent are both members of the Conservatives' "Economic Recovery Committee", the group of wise men set up by David Cameron to get us out of the crisis.

Or perhaps Osborne could ask Jeremy Isaacs, former chief executive of Lehman Brothers Europe, and Roger Nagioff, another former Lehman banker. Like Gent, they are Tory party donors who have given Cameron more than £200,000, qualifying them for membership of his "Leaders Group", which enjoys private meetings with the Conservative leader.

FLYING CARPETBAGGER

WHEN Geoff Hoon picked Dame Deirdre Hutton to chair the Civil Aviation Authority last month, he didn't seem worried that she has no aviation experience, unlike her predecessor and many other board members.

The Department for Transport said her background chairing the Food Standards Agency meant "she is used to regulating where safety is the top priority". Ignoring the equating of pie safety to plane safety, Deirdre's approach to risk is far from reassuring: she was deputy chair of the Financial Services Authority from 2004 until last December, leaving the post just as the financial crisis bit.

She joined the FSA board in 1997, so helped run the organisation when its "light touch" regulation allowed banks to soar into the financial stratosphere before crashing to the ground. She came into financial regulation from the National Consumers Council, but under her lead the FSA was no more responsible regulating consumer lending than it was regulating complex financial instruments, as shown by the mountain of personal debt and unrealistic mortgages now engulfing so many over-extended Britons.

However, Deirdre is a government favourite willing to serve as requested. She helped write the Hooper Report, which recommended Post Office privatisation; and last year Alistair Darling gave her a place on the board of the Treasury.

ITV

Britain's Got Talent (ITV1)

AS ITV's only current hit younger than *Coronation Street* – and the show that may have delayed for a few months Mikey Grade failing his talent contest as super-boss of commercial telly – *Britain's Got Talent* can do pretty much whatever it wants and, during this third run, viewers have frequently felt that the series is playing by private rules.

Take last week's edition of the programme privately known backstage as "Cowell's Got Botox". Ant & Dec, the jokey moderators employed to disguise the deep streak of cruelty and humiliation in the format, announced that a little tot called Hollie was going to be the next guest. Cutely togged out in a pink tutu, the little girl announced that she was going to do her ballet moves for the raddled panellists.

Interviewed in the wings of the audition auditorium, Hollie's mum and dad told the erstwhile Geordie quiz-show fixers they just loved watching their daughter doing her ballet.

Captured by an unusually low camera angle, the little ballerina tiptoed out on to the stage and told Cowell, Moron and Holden that she was going to dance for them. As she teetered through a few steps of the dying baby swan, a close-up of Cowell showed his disdainful face, then cut to his hand hovering above the reject buzzer.

At this exact moment, the tottering poppet began to belt out, in a perfect karaoke of Julie Andrews, "I could have danced all night." Cowell, looking as astonished as his fierce anti-crease regime now allows, dropped his mouth into the pantomime of "What the hell...?" that is his favoured shtick. Moron's face lit up as if the girl had suddenly turned into a giant bacon sandwich and fries and Holden's eyes glittered on the brink of the tears that seem to be her main instrument of critical praise.

Simultaneously, the mouths of many members of the audience must have dropped agape at the sheer effrontery of all this. At the very least, the girl and her parents had misled the *BGT* minders and Ant & Dec about the true nature of this dance act; but anyone who had watched the first couple of shows in this run will have been suspicious that rather too many of this year's contenders feel like stunts.

"I didn't get where I am today by not rehashing old shows"

For example, the big surprise before Hollie had been the little boy who was on the brink of elimination until Cowell suggested he try a different song. Luckily, Michael Jackson's *Thriller* was conveniently cued up on the stage-side tape machine and the kid knocked them dead, possibly helped by a long stint playing Wacko in a stage show.

Or take the series three contestant who has most encouraged Cowell to attempt a smile and Holden to cry: Susan Boyle, the hirsute crooner and gratefully grabbed official tabloid replacement for St Jade. You don't have to watch her audition tape 14m times on YouTube to feel that there's something a bit stagey about the amazed reactions of the weird trio of judges.

It may just be that the chief judge and record company scout's reactions are now so circumscribed, but Cowell looks like someone who expects to be surprised when he invites the odd-looking vocalist to sing for them. Is it possible that he had previously heard a demo tape or that word had come back from the team vetting the wannabes backstage?

It may seem unlikely that ITV would risk such cosmetic tactics following recent scandals, but the broadcaster continues to show signs of being in a mess over competitions: through cock-up rather than conspiracy, the commentators at the Manchester United v Everton FA Cup semi-final twice blurted out the answer to a big quiz question with appetising prizes that had been asked at half-time. And, interestingly, it is never stated at any point in the preamble to *Britain's Got Talent* that the judges are seeing the contestants blind.

Certainly, the producers and competitor-shifters are well aware in advance of who is going to be terrible because, in a tactic that continues to leave a nasty taste in the mouth, a succession of car-crash acts is still sent in front of Frownless, Witless and Weeper before t hey are introduced to the hairy monster or tripping ballerina who turns out to have an amazing voice. These instant discards – last week it was a drag act singing *Without You* and a retired swimming pool manager who does handstands on knives – are cruelly served up for YouTube humiliation in a practice that makes a nonsense of the suggestion in the Susan Boyle storyline that every performer, no matter how unlikely, is given an equal chance.

Still, the figures for this year's show on ITV and web-sharing sites around the world mean that Cowell will always be able to afford any cosmetic work he needs. One thing, though, would make him look worried if he still could. By greedily stretching out the qualifying heats over as many weeks as possible, ITV may have buggered up the format, resulting in a situation in which the demand for more pictures and news of Susan Boyle can only be met by newspapers, rather than by the show itself.

In that case, Cowell is going to have to borrow Piers' nickname.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

TWO months on from the BBC's strict ban on presenters or their agents taking executive producer roles on their programmes except under the most "exceptional" circumstances (*Eye* 1232), how is life under the new regime?

Tonight's the Night, the John Barrowman-fronted Saturday-night schlockathon, made its debut on 18 April. It is a co-production between BBC Productions and Barrowman Barker, a production company owned by John Barrowman and his agent Gavin Barker. Alongside no fewer than two producers, one senior producer, a series producer, four producer/directors, three edit producers, eight assistant producers, a "senior celebrity producer" and an executive producer for the BBC was credited an "executive producer for Barrowman Barker", one Gavin Barker.

LAST year the BBC's digital radio station 6Music was fined a total of £150,000 by Ofcom for repeatedly faking the results of listener competitions by getting members of staff and friends of the production team to pretend to be listeners on air – a deception for which it had already been forced to fire its head of programming and one of its producers. So has it learned its lesson?

Not entirely. Last week the BBC confirmed that Barry Lally, one of morning show presenter George Lamb's on-air sidekicks, had been repeatedly posting messages of praise for Lamb and his show on the station's messageboard while posing as an ordinary listener behind the nickname "U-Bend".

Lamb – a presenter so actively disliked that 4,961 radio fans have signed a petition to "Get Lamb Out" of the station, while his own on-air appeals to listeners to commit to "Keep Lamb On" resulted in only 2,186 signatures – was doggedly championed by U-Bend. When asked by other messageboard users, "U-Bend" flatly denied he had ever appeared on the show.

Once U-Bend's identity was discovered, BBC staff at first fobbed questioners off with a standard "Safeguarding Trust" response, until finally, on 21 April, Nick Reynolds, the "editor, blogs and social media in BBC Online", confirmed that Barry Lally was indeed U-Bend, that he had been "banned from the boards" and 6Music bosses were "investigating what further action should be taken."

Lally also vanished from the show with no explanation a few weeks ago, and curiously, producer Mike Hanson appears to have gone AWOL too. What could be going on?

He won the annual award of the Guild of Professional Toastmakers for best after-dinner speaker of 1973,

The Times obit for Sir Clement Freud

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: When commuters are squashed together on trains, they are said to be packed in like what?

Contestant: Eels.

AR: What word meaning deep and long-lasting sadness comes from two Greek words meaning "black" and "bile"?

Contestant: Liquorice.

AR: What "Z" is a term used in literature to refer to a soft, gentle breeze?

Contestant: Zippy.

AR: The television presenter and forecaster who was head of the BBC Weather Centre from 1991 to 2000 was Bill who?

Contestant: Gates.

"Your argument that the new Star Trek movie is not just for geeks is slightly weakened by the fact that you've written it in Klingon"

O·B·N

"I am sorry to see Michael Grade go, because it marks the end of an age and possibly of an industry. Many of our dreams disappear along with him. He's still big – it is *television* that got small."

SARAH SANDS,
Independent on Sunday

Submitted by Richard Cooper

***WOLVERINE* opens this week and is the latest instalment in the Hollywood blockbuster series, *X-Men*. *Eye* readers may not be aware of this, unless of course they take the *Sun* as well, in which case they cannot have escaped this momentous occasion in cinematic history.**

On 8 April, the paper launched a best sideburns contest, "inspired by *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, starring Hugh Jackman". Two weeks later there was a reminder alongside a picture of the film's leading man: "Hugh Jackman's not in hairy *Wolverine* mode but he is within a whisker of picking a winner in the *Sun*'s £5k sideburns contest."

Jackman then popped along to the *Sun*'s offices to take part in a charity abseil – the cue for more gratuitous puffery. Finally it fell to Robin Galloway to crowbar a plug into a feature about Twitter. "If you're following *X-Men* hero Hugh Jackman you'll know he wants Twitterers to tell him about their favourite charities – and the most passionate tweet will see him donate £100,000 of his own money to that good cause," Galloway sighed admiringly. "*Wolverine* has certainly sparked Tweetmania."

Why all this interest in such a pisspoor film? No £5k prize for guessing the answer: it's produced by the Dirty Digger's Twentieth Century Fox.

Police have been hiding their ID at demonstrations for years — I saw it happening at Euston at the N30 anti-World Trade Organisation protests in 1999. It is great the media is taking notice but why the silence for so long?
Name supplied.

Letter to the Evening Standard

MODESTY BLAZE

"The moment we first made a noise nearly 30 years ago it was a fantastic, magnificent sound," Ure concludes, "but at the back of your mind you're thinking, 'What if that doesn't exist anymore? What if we don't have that?' And, of course, we do. We walked in and it was there." – **Midge Ure** on Ultravox's comeback, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 April

ELITE FARCES

GUMSHOES from Westminster Council's trading standards department are investigating coke-snorting, sex-mad Oskar Keysell and his contract publishing firm, Elite, whose creative way with circulation figures was exposed in the last *Eye*.

Meanwhile, since our piece appeared, Elite's traditional website (at a co.uk address) has been supplemented by a new one with the address elitepublishing.es – based in Spain, in other words.

Although it still boasts that Elite's office is "in Paddington, London" (above platform one of Paddington station, to be precise), those familiar with Keysell's impulsive habits now wonder if he is planning to relocate the business to Barcelona, beyond reach of Westminster city council and its tiresome trading-standards sleuths.

AD NAUSEAM

LAST week's edition of *The Apprentice* featured the now-traditional trip to an ad agency. Alan Sugar dumped a rubbish product – a cereal – on his rubbish contestants, and they duly concocted some rubbish commercials. The worst one, which featured an aptly titled character called Pants Man, earned its team leader the sack.

The agency that landed the free plug in front of 7m viewers this year was McCann Erickson. McCann's were also involved in the judging. Oddly, though, none of the contestants being criticised thought to mention that McCann's current idea for a cereal ad consists of the notion that Shreddies are "knitted by Nanas". Look out for the ads – they make "Pants Man" seem like the very summit of inspiration.

"Sorry Mr Gibson, I don't think we can blame the Jews for this one!"

CHANNEL 4 needs all the cash it can get right now, but kowtowing to the demands of an advertiser like it did during the recent premiere of Al Gore's climate change film *An Inconvenient Truth* smacked of desperation.

The first ad break was given over in its entirety to what appeared to be a short film, an impression that was further enhanced when C4's own continuity announcer intoned: "And now here's a short film about doers." The short film, it emerged when the Honda logo finally appeared, was in fact a two-minute commercial – the car-maker had piggybacked on the general greenery all around the ad break to stress its own environmental claims.

The advertising codes have an entire section devoted to ensuring that viewers know what is an advert and what isn't. No doubt the regulators will want to know why C4's own announcer introduced an ad as a "short film" about the environment, in the middle of a longer film about the environment.

"Better remove the sticker, unless you want Madonna breaking into your car"

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

SO, the axe has fallen, courtesy of Mr Darling: £20m off the operating budget for the Department of Culture, Media & Sport in 2010/11, with a reduction of £4m in funding for Arts Council England.

Given the standards that apply to counting money these days, with noughts running off the page, it hasn't been enough of a cut to get too much outrage going in the press. In fact, there have been bizarrely few complaints. ACE itself applied a rictus smile, said it was a shame and then, two days later, announced that it was finding money from other sources that would more than plug the gap. And even the National Campaign for the Arts replied that, in the circumstances, it could have been worse.

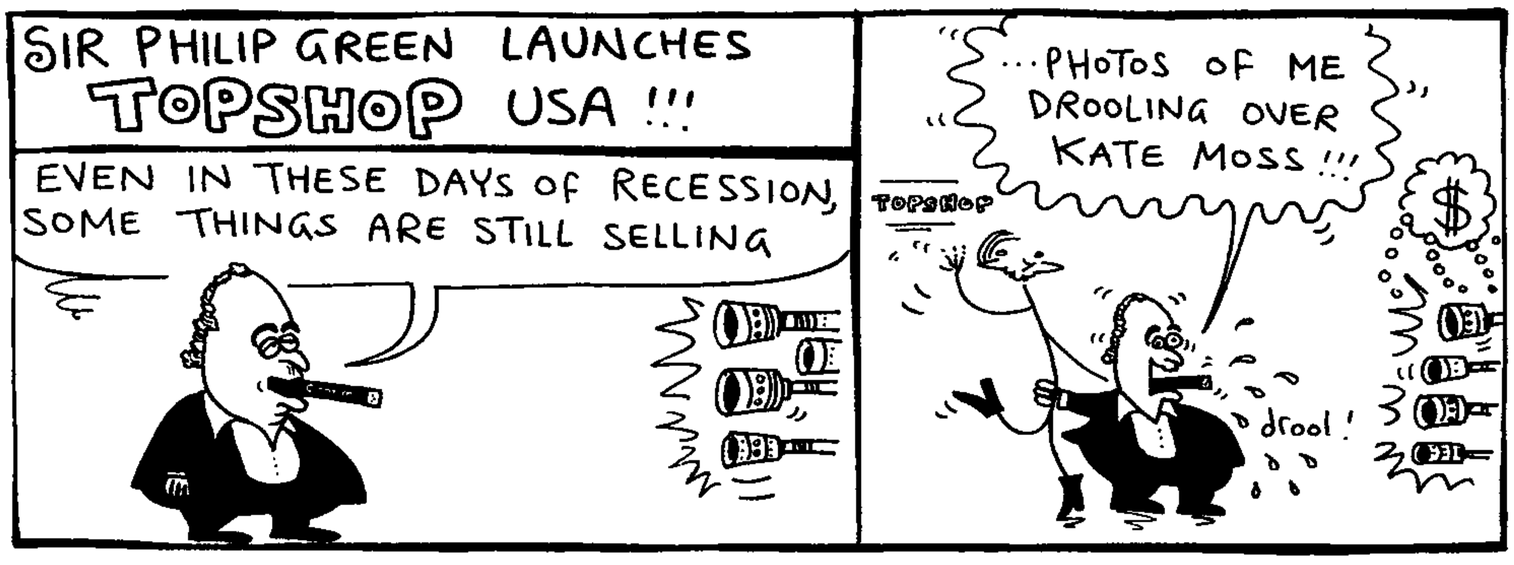
But the truth is that the arts in general – and music in particular – have had to learn to make a little go a long way. So when a little of that little dries up, it's significant. And what everyone agrees is that the real financial problems for the music festivals, orchestras and opera houses in Britain haven't totally kicked in yet. Sponsors may be heading for the hills right now, but it will be next year when you won't see them for dust.

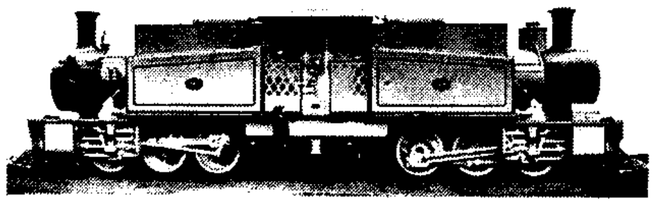
By general consent the UK arts scene is about 12 months in arrears of that in America; so for a glimpse of what will happen here in 2010, you look at the US in 2009. And what do you see? Mayhem and chaos. Within the past few days it's been announced that New York City Opera's endowment fund has shrivelled from $51m to $3m, with expected box-office income down from $13m to less than $0.5m. The Atlanta Symphony is sending its players on paid leave. The Brooklyn Philharmonic has cancelled its entire 2009/10 season. So has the Santa Clara Symphony. The Miami-based New World Symphony is so desperate for customers it's sending staff on to South Beach (dressed for some arcane reason as Sherlock Holmes) to sell concert tickets at a knockdown $2.50 a time. And so on. Watch this space.

Lunchtime O'Boulez

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


SIR PHILIP GREEN LAUNCHES TOPSHOP USA !!!
EVEN IN THESE DAYS of RECESSION, SOME THINGS ARE STILL SELLING
...PHOTOS OF ME DROOLING OVER KATE MOSS !!!
TopShop
drool!



SIGNAL FAILURES

Who's laughing now?

THE government says it won't bail out rail franchises during the recession but rejects nationalisation. Which policy will give if any franchises approach breaking point? Rail minister Andrew Adonis gave a clue recently in the *Guardian*.

"British Rail was a national joke in terms of quality and reliability," he said. "Being honest about the past is essential to realising the future. Railways, like any other industry, have got to modernise." If only Adonis were honest about the past.

If he were, he'd acknowledge that today's railway gets several times more cash in subsidy and fares than BR ever did – and BR's debt was nothing like the £25bn Network Rail has been allowed to run up. The entire BR system came under one board of directors, who weren't on performance bonuses. By contrast, each bit of today's railway has its own top brass, some of whom pocket more than £1m a year, and the system relies on an army of bureaucrats and consultants to monitor, plan, specify, allocate, advise and arbitrate.

The government says it wants greater efficiencies to save £14bn of public spending, yet dismisses rail nationalisation with the claim that BR's "quality and reliability" were a joke. Tell that to passengers crammed for hours into stiff seats on a Virgin Pendolino that reeks of toilet: BR's intercity trains had generous legroom, comfortable seats and restaurant cars. Nor will it wash with passengers forced on to rail-replacement buses when lines routinely close for maintenance: BR usually kept at least one track open during maintenance or diverted trains to keep replacement buses a rarity.

As for reliability, latest statistics show 90.7 percent of trains arrive on time, but only with the aid of "padded-out" timetables (*Eyes passim*) and with replacement buses excluded. BR's punctuality in 1993-4 was recorded as 91.2 percent, despite disruptive preparations for privatisation. BR didn't resort to closing train doors early (*Eye* 1219) to improve its punctuality figures, and it often held back connecting trains if incoming trains were late.

The railways have certainly "modernised" since BR was dismembered, if by modernization you mean reduced quality and reliability in return for higher fares and subsidy.

RICHARD BRANSON claimed the moral high ground when Virgin Trains dropped the idea of running Shrewsbury-London services. That idea was widely seen as an attempt to crush a small new firm (part-owned by Germany's state railway) which had the gall to start services between Wrexham, Shrewsbury and London last spring. Virgin showed no interest in Wrexham for 11 years but launched a competing Wrexham-London service (not via Shrewsbury) in December.

Beardie wrote to the *Times*: "We would not want to be accused of being anti-competitive, so we have decided to withdraw the [proposed Shrewsbury] additional services." A magnanimous Beardie? The illusion was shattered by Virgin's press office, which revealed the idea was dropped because detailed analysis showed Shrewsbury services wouldn't make the kind of profit Beardie expects from his trains (£24m for him personally in 2007). "There is not a compelling case to justify additional trains," said Virgin.

If Beardie genuinely wants to relinquish anti-competitiveness, he'll waive Virgin's unique guarantee against competition on the west-coast mainline, Britain's busiest railway. It was granted when Virgin and Railtrack promised a 140mph service, not just the government-specified 125mph one. The promise was broken but the competition ban remains, stopping the Wrexham firm taking passengers between London and major midlands stations.

The 1997 North Western Trains franchise agreement promised trains to London from Rochdale and many other places, but Virgin's subsequent deal excluded NWT from many stations. Some of NWT's London trains never materialised, the rest were soon ditched. In the absence of rail competition or regulation, Virgin has hiked "anytime" fares (London-Manchester return up 160 percent since 1997, or 187 percent for first class) and slapped restrictions on ostensibly "regulated" fares to force many travellers to buy dearer "anytime" tickets.

'Dr B Ching'

ECO-GNOMICS

Supermarket sweep

TESCO's rampant growth continues, with a number of new stores being planned across Wales and the west of England. Most recently, the supermarket giant revealed it had applied for permission to build a store in Hanham, South Gloucestershire – a full six years after buying the site.

Tesco had withdrawn its original planning application, but resurrected its proposal in 2007 by putting on an exhibition which it said was part of a consultation exercise. When once again no plan was submitted, relieved locals thought it had been abandoned. But those who oppose the project have hastily had to re-form their *Say No To Tesco* campaign.

Hanham parish council, angry that Tesco has provided no proper opportunity for local consultation, recently held an extraordinary meeting to give people the chance to have their say. The town has already noticed a negative impact on local shops from the arrival of an ASDA store, and residents are worried about the effect more competition will have on local shopkeepers during a recession, not to mention the extra road traffic a Tesco would generate.

Tesco is deploying its usual arguments about job creation and "economic benefits" to local small shopkeepers of having a Tesco in the area. But Tesco's PR man in charge of the region, a young chap by the name of Felix, will doubtless find himself having to defend his employer's relentless expansion. Still, if things get too tricky he can always call upon the wise counsel of the Tesco board's environmental and "corporate responsibility" adviser, former Tory environment secretary John Gummer. In government he was rather against the expansion of supermarkets like Tesco but in recent years has made quite a lot of money out of them through his consultancy, Sancroft. It shouldn't be too hard for the young Tesco spin-doctor to get some free advice from Mr Gummer, or as Felix calls him, "Dad".

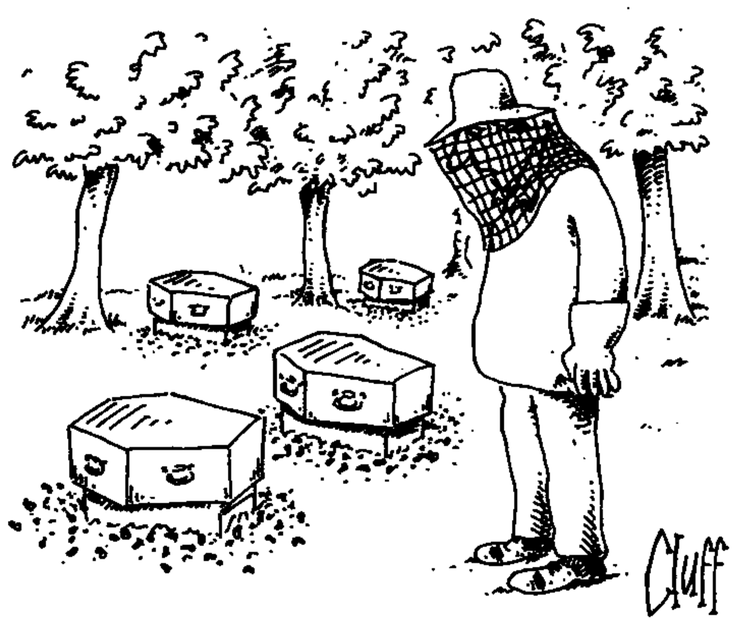
BEE HEADING

WHEN quizzed on *Farming Today* about the newly announced £10m for research into the decline of honey bees and other pollinating insects, environment secretary Hilary Benn said bees' big problems were diseases, bad weather and loss of habitat. "We haven't seen any evidence that [pesticides] have an adverse impact on bees," he insisted.

There is in fact already enough evidence of harm to bees for some pesticides to have been banned in several European countries, including France, Italy and Germany (see *Eye* 1226). Scientific papers dating back to at least 2003 have linked honey bee problems, such as becoming disoriented and not finding their way back to the hive, to a group of pesticides called neonicotinoids. Last year millions of bees died along the Rhine after German farmers used the neonicotinoid clothianidin on crops. Manufacturer Bayer CropScience blamed farmers for not correctly sticking the compound to seed coats.

Presumably Benn is not up to date either with the latest development in the US, where the Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Pesticide Registration (DPR) have begun re-evaluating hundreds of pesticide products after receiving an "adverse effects disclosure" about the neonicotinoid pesticide imidacloprid from Bayer itself.

The DPR says that, according to data in the disclosure, high levels of the chemical have been found in the leaves and blossoms of treated flowering plants. In some plants the levels were more than 20 times the lethal concentration for bees. The notice of re-evaluation also reveals that research still to be published by a scientist at the University of California found imidacloprid residues in eucalyptus nectar and pollen of up to 550 parts per billion; 185ppb being fatal to bees. How much more evidence does Mr Benn need?



PRISON NEWS

CONGRATULATIONS to the Prison Service, which last month released a long-term inmate with £5,500 of savings in cash from his prison wages.

The vast majority of inmates leave prison of course with a pittance; but this ex-prisoner was part of an experiment run by the Howard League which enabled inmates to work in a commercial graphic design studio in Coldingly Prison, earning real wages. From these they had to support their families, donate to Victim Support and contribute 30 percent to a charitable fund – and pay tax.

This was all very laudable, given that it usually costs the taxpayer £120,000 a year to keep someone in jail. But then the Prison Service decided prisoners could not be employed by outsiders and therefore could not pay tax, forcing the scheme to fold and the Inland Revenue to give back all the tax it had collected.

Eye Told You So: "The government's plans to build its way out of the prison overcrowding crisis by putting up three ludicrously named Titan jails, each housing 2,500 inmates, is doomed before it has even begun."

– *Private Eye*, 21 December 2007.

"Plans for three 2,500-place Titan prisons costing an estimated £350m each are to be ditched."

– BBC News, 24 April 2009

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

FI-FO SILVER LINING

RAMPANT paranoia among supporters of Southwest One, the hare-brained £500m outsourcing joint venture between Somerset county council, Avon & Somerset police and IBM (*Eyes passim*).

Eye 1230 reported how chief constable Colin Port had spent more than £90,000 of public money on libel lawyers Carter-Fuck in an attempt to intimidate local BBC and ITV hacks who had raised questions about the accountability and transparency of the scheme, in which hundreds of council and police staff have transferred to the new company in the name of increased efficiency and cost-saving. Port was particularly annoyed at suggestions of a conflict of interest because his wife, Susan Barnes, was the county council's director for the project.

Now Port's ally and joint cheerleader for the scheme, Somerset county council chief executive Alan Jones, is looking foolish after a vindictive campaign against a prominent critic badly backfired. Jones, who tells staff his managerial credo is "Fit In or Fuck Off" (Fi-Fo), has it in for the council's former Lib Dem deputy leader Paul Buchanan, a persistent critic of Southwest One.

Jones made dozens of complaints against Buchanan to the Standards Board for England, alleging secretiveness, undermining staff, aggressive and threatening behaviour, rudeness, intimidation, anger, disrespect, fraud, sexism, racism and homophobia. The SBE spent two years and many thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money investigating the claims, finally rejecting them all except one at the end of March. Having been expelled from the Lib Dem group and stripped of his committee posts and deputy leadership, Buchanan has received a censure – the mildest sanction the SBE can deliver – for being "careless" in allowing others to hear him swear under his breath.

Speaking in an adjournment debate in the Commons last week, Ian Liddell-Grainger, Tory MP for Bridgwater, accused Jones of "deliberate deceit and victimisation. He set out to destroy Paul Buchanan. The tactics Jones used make Damian McBride look like an angel."

Jones is currently abroad, singing the praises of Southwest One. At a presentation in Washington DC he described it as "innovative beyond public imagination" – a typical nugget of nonsense from the man who won this column's Blue-Sky Thinker of the Year award in 2005.

● CLASS WAR has broken out in the Labour party in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham. In one corner are seven long-standing working-class councillors who have been deselected, including former Mayor Dee Hunt and current deputy mayor Fred Barns; in the other is the MP for Barking, Margaret Hodge, and her middle-class allies.

The *Barking and Dagenham Post* has been bombarded with letters of support for the defenestrated councillors, and a petition demanding their reinstatement has been organised. The seven, many of whom have long been stalwart opponents of the BNP and its previous incarnations, have been hurt by false rumours that they have been cosying up to the fascists. With elections due in May next year and the BNP, the official opposition on the council with 12 seats, standing to gain the most from the backlash against the deselections, Hodge and her cronies are playing a dangerous game.

DAFT IDEA

HOLLOW laughter in the London borough of Southwark, which has been awarded "beacon status" for its harmonious racial diversity by the local government quango the Improvement and Development Agency (Idea).

To add to the hilarity, residents have learned that Lib Dem council leader Nick Stanton is to pontificate to an audience of 100 on of the subject of racial diversity at a "community empowerment event" at the swanky wine bar Vinopolis on Thursday 30 April.

It is of course encouraging that different racial groups rub along pretty well. But, insofar as they do, it is despite, rather than because of, Southwark council. *Eye* readers will remember how, in 2005, Stanton was desperate to prevent publication of a report by Lord Ouseley, former head of the commission for racial equality, into what had been termed a "culture of racism" at the council. It eventually appeared in a heavily censored form, Ouseley having been persuaded not to use the phrase "institutional racism" but the vaguer "inferred discriminatory treatment" instead.

Ouseley attacked Southwark for being run by a "white hierarchy" where there are no black executive members in a borough that is 50 per cent non-white, and only two ethnic officers in the top 30 management team. Many remember Stanton's "What did the Stephen Lawrence inquiry achieve?" outburst in the same year.

As the *Eye* went to press Sadiq Khan MP, minister for community cohesion, and other black and Asian luminaries were being urged to boycott the Vinopolis jolly, which is expected to cost Southwark's voters, black and white, more than £15,000.

WIGAN PEER

LORD SMITH of Leigh, aka Cllr Peter Smith, leader of Labour-controlled Wigan council, is under fire for allegedly "whipping" party members to vote for the demolition of historic Leigh Girls' Grammar School, against the advice of both the Victorian Society and English Heritage.

Eight Labour members of the planning committee were prepared to accept officers' recommendations for the school to be demolished and replaced with a modern building until, with the rest of the planning committee, they went on a

"Burger?"

site visit, saw the impressive building and changed their minds. They voted with the opposition to ask officers to go away and come up with an alternative to demolition. Hurrah! Democracy at work!

Alas, Cllr Smith was not happy. He took the eight aside and instructed them to overturn that votes at the next meeting and back the plan for demolition after all – which they cravenly did.

Opposition councillors have complained about Smith to the Standards Board of England. He denies the allegation. His only problem is that one of the Labour councillors he took on one side isn't a Labour councillor any more. Norman Bradbury has since joined the Independents and is happy to give evidence of how the baron tampered with the democratic process.

PANEL GAME

CAMPAIGNERS keen to put a brake on the Rotherham councillors' gravy train have uncovered some interesting names on the "independent" panel that undertakes the annual review of members' allowances.

When councillors vote to increase their annual pay they always refer to the recommendations of the panel and say they are simply acting on the advice of an independent body. The latest "advice" was to give themselves a rise of 3 percent this year, which they have, despite uproar in the town.

Now a freedom of information request has uncovered some interesting names among the panel members. Such as Nick Cragg, of Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, which in March 2006 paid for the leader of the council, Roger Stone, to join a four-day delegation to Nashville, Tennessee, to "forge business links". Cragg is a personal friend of Stone. The council's hospitality register shows that in December 2005 the two exchanged Christmas presents valued at £240 each at the home of the leader.

Also on the remuneration panel is Pat Keenan from Rotherham trades union council, who is also a delegate to Rotherham district Labour party. Fifty of the town's 63 councillors are Labour. And who appoints the panel? None other than Mike Cuff, chief executive of, er, Rotherham borough council.

● UNEASY sits the crown on the head of Mary Mears, leader of Skidrow-on-Sea's minority Conservative administration, which depends for power on the single vote of former Conservative turned Independent Jayne Bennett.

Residents of Hove's Goldsmid ward are represented, or rather not represented, by young Tory Paul Lainchbury. Cllr Lainchbury's business as a financial adviser occupies so much of his time that he is unable properly to fulfil his duties as a councillor – to such an extent that, honourably, he no longer claims his allowance. The next honourable step, of course, would be to stand down – and, indeed, that is Cllr Lainchbury's wish, but Cllr Mears will not let him, for fear that a by-election would result in a gain for Labour or the Greens. So the voters of Hove can go hang.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

THIS GOOGLE STREET VIEW IS A DISGRACE!
Go gle STREET VIEW
I COULDN'T AGREE MORE, JEZ: AN INVASION OF PRIVACY, AN INVITATION TO GAWPERS AND BURGLARS...
AND WORST OF ALL THE PICTURES WERE TAKEN BEFORE WE HAD A CHANCE TO GET THE HOUSE FAÇADE REPAINTED!
LET ALONE GET THE BRICKWORK REPOINTED!
Go gle

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE British Museum is pressing on with its plan to build an extension on the north-west corner of its Bloomsbury site designed by Messrs Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners, and will now apply for planning permission and listed building consent.

As I predicted in *Eye* 1229, this will mean demolishing the two replica Georgian houses in Montague Place which replaced two genuine Georgian houses destroyed by the museum 30 years ago. Instead we will have a new façade, largely of glass – what else? – by Milord Rogers's firm.

I had not fully appreciated how destructive this scheme is to the existing architecture of the museum. The new building aims to provide much needed exhibition space, but piled on top are two additional floors rising as high as the roofs of existing buildings. As the space between them will only be about 2m wide, it will prevent daylight from entering some notably fine interiors.

The rooms affected are the western half of the long Chinese Gallery and the magnificent North Staircase in Sir John Burnet's King Edward VII Wing – arguably the finest Edwardian building in London – and the earlier Arched Room by the museum's original architect, Sir Robert Smirke. This last is a perfectly preserved and very elegant library, built in 1837-39, which is well lit by daylight. As the Camden Civic Society protests, what is proposed "will degrade interiors which at present function very well in addition to being noble spaces of the highest architectural value".

The Arched Room – no more daylight?

Adding insult to injury, the museum also wants to create three new doors in the north wall of the Great Court behind the wretched west "servery". These will essentially be holes punched in the solid wall of Smirke's Greek Ionic elevations which were carefully restored as part of the Great Court scheme after the British Library's bookstacks had been removed. This illiteracy has rightly been described as "vandalism" by the Civic Society and the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

But the British Museum has a poor record in its recent treatment of its buildings. A decade ago it destroyed the fine North Library before listed building consent had been obtained, and the replacement is an utterly bland and characterless space. As the Civic Society says, recalling the editorial in the *Evening Standard* at the time of the Wrong Stone fiasco (see *Eyes passim*): "The trustees consider themselves for custodians of the Elgin marbles... it would help if they proved themselves fit custodians of some other stones in their care, namely the very fabric of the museum itself."

***LORD ROGERS** is also at the centre of the controversy over the proposed redevelopment of the Chelsea Barracks site by a firm of developers owned by the royal family of Qatar, the firm having outbid the US government which was interested in putting its new embassy on the site.*

There is much to comment on – not least that military land once owned by British taxpayers now belongs to an oppressive Middle Eastern regime – but the controversy really blew up when it emerged that the Prince of Wales had written privately suggesting that a design by Quinlan Terry rather than Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners would be more sympathetic to the neighbouring Royal Hospital by Sir Christopher Wren.

Now the Sunday Times has published a letter defending Rogers, signed by 11 of the great and good of the architectural world. Signatories include Milord Foster, as well as international superstars like Herzog and de Meuron, who have been hired by Sir Nicholas Serota (another signatory) to add a monstrous extension to Tate Modern (Eyes passim). Rogers' cronies accuse Prince Charles of using his "privileged position" and assert that: "It is essential in a modern democracy that private comments and behind-the scenes lobbying by the prince should not be used to skew the course of an open and democratic planning process that is under way."

This is rich. In 2005 Rogers tried (in vain) to use his own influence to subvert the planning process when he asked his "new" Labour chums to call in for public inquiry the Classical scheme by Quinlan Terry for a new infirmary building for the Royal Hospital which had planning permission from Kensington & Chelsea council and was supported by the Chelsea Society. The Margaret Thatcher Infirmary, which opened last year, may be a typically pedestrian and unimaginative design by Terry and a poor neighbour to Wren's masterpiece, but that is not the point. The Prince of Wales, is not trying to "skew" the planning process. He is merely suggesting that the developer chose the wrong architect – a perfectly reasonable point of view.

As for the adjacent Chelsea Barracks site, the proposals by Rogers Stirk Harbour for tall blocks of flats has already been reduced in density following criticism. But even though it remains a gross overdevelopment, it still has the support of CABE, the obliging Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment. The Quinlan Terry scheme which is presented as an alternative resembles a Scandinavian housing development of the 1920s, ineptly tarted up with pediments and Palladian windows. It at least has the merit of being properly urban and faced in decent masonry, but it promises to be pretentious and banal – like all his buildings.

If only the developers would employ a decent architect. They do exist.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

The archetypal misunderstood artist, reviled and poverty-stricken in his lifetime, his visionary genius appreciated only after his death...
TATE BRITAIN
WILLIAM BLAKE'S 1809 EXHIBITION
A RECREATION OF HIS FAILED DEBUT SHOW
Talk about corny!
Loser!

PUMP ACTION

OF ALL people, scientists need to be free to argue in an open society. The scientific method consists of a researcher putting forward a new proposal and his or her colleagues testing the living daylights out of it without fear of the consequences.

Not in Britain, however, as Peter Wilmshurst, a consultant cardiologist at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, is discovering. Here, peer review is replaced by review by Mr Justice Eady and his fellow judges. Here, tests in the lab are replaced with experiments by libel lawyers to see if their fees can expand to infinity.

Dr Wilmshurst is faced with a crushing court action because he questioned the effectiveness of a procedure by the American medical company NMT to close "patent foramen ovale", or holes in the heart. PFOs aren't life-threatening, but researchers suspected that they might cause migraines because they sent blood the "wrong way" – directly to the brain rather than through the lungs.

Everyone involved in the NMT trial agreed that the procedure had no effect on migraines. But Dr Wilmshurst went further and claimed that in a significant minority of cases NMT did not do what it intended to do and close holes in the heart either. The surgeons who performed the operations reported that 94 percent had been successful, but Dr Wilmshurst reviewed the "echocardiograms" – ultrasound videos of patients' hearts – and found that "around 30 percent had signs that some blood was going the wrong way".

When Dr Wilmshurst told NMT of his findings, the company made it clear that it no longer valued his advice and dropped him. Another eminent doctor, Michael J Mullen of the Royal Brompton in London, told the online American medical journal theheart.org that Dr Wilmshurst's concerns were misplaced. He and NMT alleged that Dr Wilmshurst had long argued that holes in the heart caused migraines, and that he preferred to say the NMT device was faulty than accept that his theory was wrong.

It seemed like a standard scientific dispute, until NMT decided to call in the legal authorities. After Dr Wilmshurst spoke to theheart.org, NMT sued and demanded that the journal remove his remarks. Because freedom of speech is protected in America, the editors could ignore NMT – a liberty the British Dr Wilmshurst cannot enjoy.

Like the acclaimed science writer Simon Singh, who is being sued by the British Chiropractic Association for questioning the scientific status of its alternative therapy (*Eye* 1225), Dr Wilmshurst faces personal ruin. Even though his hospital received money from the trial, contracted him to do the research and accepted that he had a right to comment on his findings, it will not support his legal costs. The Medical Defence Union has told him it won't fund libel defences because of the potentially extortionate bills.

Doctors have launched an appeal to help him, but even if he loses it won't settle the dispute. Prof Sir John Lilleyman, an adviser to the National Research Ethics Service, told theheart.org that "there are outstanding ethical questions that need to be addressed" and recommended an independent review of the echocardiograms.

As 25,000 patients have already had the NMT procedure, he wanted an independent, disinterested expert to review the scans and order more scans if necessary. The last place he expected to find the answers was in the libel court.

'Ratbiter'

Letters

Brown sauce

Sir,

I think you missed a good one in the cartoon on page 19, Eye 1234.

My version would be: "It's magnificent. From now on no-one will hear the name 'Brown' without thinking 'Culpability'."

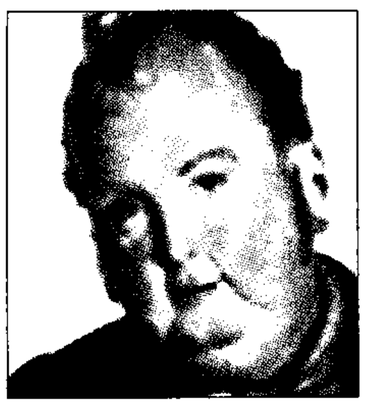
Or did you think of it first but your lawyers wouldn't let you use it so you relied on the twisted humour of your readers?

Yours,
S. GARRETT,

Kenilworth.

Lookalike

Saunders



McBride

Sir,

Can you see the resemblance between Damian McBride and the gross, drunken, sex-obsessed man played by Jennifer Saunders?

SHAUN ROLPH,

Via email.

It's a wind-up

Sir,

Congratulations on your current Eye cover (1234). I'll have to renew my subscription.

Related anagram:

The Metropolitan Police Service = Cor! Spot peeler hit a lone victim!

Yours,
PUDNI WASTI,

Via email.

WPC knackered

Sir,

Just a small moan with reference to Police Log (Eye 1233). My close friend works for the Metropolitan Police. She received no overtime pay for policing the G20 riots (14-hour shifts no less) and has been on duty for 15 days (not out of choice) with today being her first rest day! And when she'll get to take her cancelled leave is anybody's guess.

Yours, taking my friend out for a much-earned Chinese tonight!

JOANNE ROSS,

London E4.

Berks, US

Sir,

In the piece you ran in Eye 1234 on "Dolly" Draper, you refer to "Berkeley University". It's this kind of sloppiness which allowed Draper to get away with his dubious academic record in the first place. What you ought to have written is "University of California, Berkeley".

I have the honour to be, &c.
SIMON HARLEY,

High Seaton, Cumbria.

Fly in the ointment

Sir,

'Squarebasher' is correct to emphasise the political aspect of the RN's push for the F-35 (Eye 1234). However, he makes several claims about the F-35 which are incorrect. No F-35 has "burned a hole through a carrier deck" in any test. In fact the version the RN wants to purchase has not yet been tested aboard any ship at all.

The idea that the aircraft damaged a carrier deck seems to have come from a misreading of an article written by James Fallows in "The Atlantic", where he referenced the ***possibility*** *of such damage occurring being a problem that the F-35's design team had to consider in the early part of the plane's development.*

As for the complaints about the external weapons storage ruining the plane's "stealth" characteristics, this has always been known, and is a result of inaccurate marketing rather than any fault of the aircraft itself. The term "stealth" is sexier than more accurate terms which are usually ridiculous-sounding jargon.

The F-35 is, however, far superior to the joint RN-RAF Harrier force, which will be due for replacement not long after the two [yet to be confirmed] carriers enter service. In fact, this will be true whether the carriers are built or not.

Yours, with the greatest respect,
CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY.

Let there be light

Sir,

Re St Mary's Church, Bishops Lydeard (Eye 1233).

'Piloti' again states that the alleged "Comper" light fittings have been removed from the above church. In my last letter to you (10 August 2008) I stated that the new lighting system has ***not*** *replaced any other system, as there were no lights in the nave at all. The so-called "Comper" fittings were hanging underneath archways* ***and they are still there!*** *It is frustrating to write letters only to discover that they are not read. Of course, if 'Piloti' does not believe me then he/she is more than welcome to come and see for themselves.*

Incidentally, Sir Ninian Comper is, without doubt, a renowned architect but he is not the second son of God! Churches are not meant to be museum pieces where inadequate equipment must always be used. Church buildings should be able to adapt to the needs of the communities they are meant to serve. There is absolutely no evidence (that we can find) to show that these fittings were designed by Comper and I cannot believe that someone so accomplished would design something so awful that they were hopelessly inadequate for the needs of the people. In other words, the church was dark and gloomy and congregations could not see the service sheets; even the moths had difficulty finding the light!

Far from being an "alarming precedent", the Chancellor, after much deliberation, made the right decision and we are grateful for it.

Yours sincerely,
REV. MICHAEL WISHART,

Bishops Lydeard, Somerset.

Hunt ban

Sir,

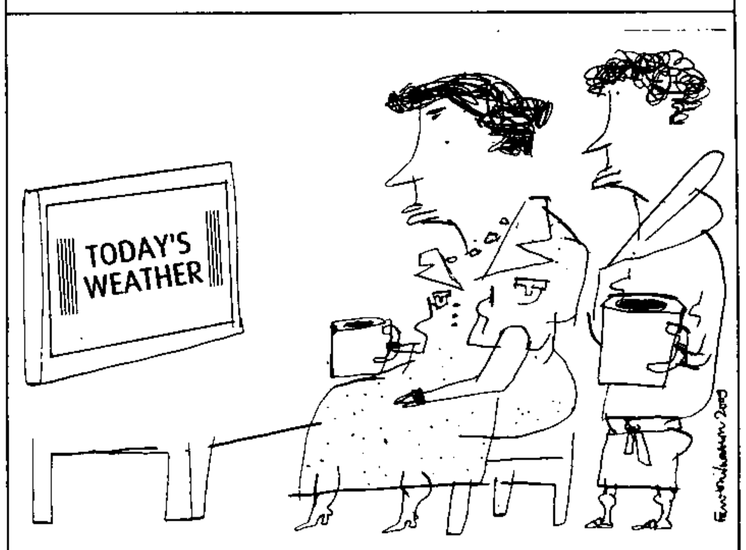
It was with sadness that I read your article quoting a "Mail Associated executive's" comments on the Telegraph's Liz Hunt (Eye 1234). Many people enjoy her contributions as she displays a wide knowledge, many interests and is fair and well-balanced.

I'm disappointed that you had to air such base and vitriolic opinions from someone too cowardly to be named. Does this person who depends on sly innuendo and malicious comment have something to fear?

Yours,
KATHLEEN BENTLEY,

Gwynedd, N. Wales.

Scenes You Seldom See



"The forecast is heavy cloud, so I won't go out wearing sunglasses on top of my head"

SOAS so-and-so's

Sir,

Your correspondent "Name & Address Withheld" (Eye 1234) implies that boycotting Israeli academic institutions is anti-Semitic. Please remind him/her that there are millions of non-Jews in Israel and millions of Jews outside Israel (many of whom feel as repelled by Israel's domestic and foreign policies as the rest of us). It is quite possible to object to Israel's policies without having any problem with Jews or Judaism, and those of us in that situation object to being incorrectly labelled as anti-Semitic.

He/she also finds it ironic that this motion was passed at the same time as one denying a platform to the BNP. The BNP haven't yet proposed building a massive "security fence" around ethnic enclaves in Britain, but it is surely only a matter of time.

Yours faithfully,
C. CARR,

London SE26.

Sinking feeling

Sir,

'Piloti' stated in his article about swimming baths (Nooks & Corners, Eye 1234) that to fill one hole and dig another is a waste of money. Here in Grange-over-Sands we can go one better. A new pool was built in 2003 to replace the old outdoor pool, built in the 1930s, as the latter supposedly leaked. The new pool was architecturally abysmal, financially unsustainable and closed after only three years. Recently the decision has been taken to demolish the new pool building and replace it with – yes, a new swimming pool as part of a retirement/leisure complex just 100 metres away!

Yours sincerely,
HUGH EDWARDS,

Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria.

Bookworm's turn

Sir,

We get the drift. 'Bookworm' doesn't like Jeffrey Archer's novels (Literary Review, Eye 1233).

Perhaps if he stopped to realise that no-one suggests that they are works of great literary merit, but more are ideal holiday reading matter, then he might be prepared to accept that novels such as "A Prisoner of Birth" are thumping great reads. Oh, and by the way, Jeffrey Archer isn't afraid to put his name on the front of his books, whereas "Bookworm" has to snipe pathetically from behind the protection of anonymity.

Not one to cancel subscriptions, but think I might just bypass his page in future.

Yours,
KEN MILNE,

Via email.

Lookalike

Boyle

Stephens

Sir,

Has anyone noted the uncanny resemblance between TV's world-famous human rights lawyer Mark Stephens and obscure Scottish singer Susan Boyle? I wonder if by any chance they are related?

Yours,
ENA B. WHEEN (MRS),

Soho.

Chappell service

Sir,

I thank Noel Thomas (Eye 1234) for correcting my earlier letter – Peter Chappell was not a speaker at the Society of Homeopaths AIDS symposium, but their flyer for the event makes clear his work was being presented. The flyer is available on their website. All other claims in my original letter are true and can be sourced online.

Yours,
JAYESH NAVIN SHAH,

Via email.

Silver service

Sir,

I was appalled by the story regarding the partial closure of the Civil Service Sports Ground (Levelling The Playing Fields, Eye 1233).

Now all the Civil Service have left are their jobs for life, gold-plated pensions and pay levels that are out-stripping the private sector.

Yours,
PAUL SMITH,

Manchester.

Pseudo Names

... I agree with Mr Juan Tanamo (Pseudo Names, Eye 1234) that G. Hadd deserves locking up, but not in some namby-pamby holiday cam jail. I suggest he samples some of the techniques recently outlawed by Softy Obama.

WALTER BOARDING.

... I have been puzzled by the appearance in my garden of a number of yellow flowers which I have no recollection of planting. Perhaps one of your readers could help me to identify them.

DAN D. LION.

... With its silly names column Private Eye really is sinking to new depths.

LUCY TANIA.

Pedantry Corner

... Leslie Hore-Belisha (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1233) did of course introduce the Belisha Beacon. When I was a boy in the 1940s the crossings were always referred to as Belisha Crossings. They were introduced in the mid-1930s. The former minister of transport probably wouldn't have had stripes, though, as he had nothing at all to do with Zebra Crossings, which were first introduced in 1951. The Belisha Crossings were marked with steel studs. In my city the posts were painted black.

RICHARD WHITTLE.

... In your Street of Shame article "Two Cheers from the Guardian....." (Issue 1234, page 4) you refer to Luxembourg having off-shore companies. I referred to my atlas to confirm that Luxembourg is entirely land-locked in the continent of Europe and cannot therefore be off-shore.

PHIL BYROM.

... Hawkeye Thenoo (Pseudo Names, Eye 1234) suggested a genetic link between Scots and the North American Mohicans. However, Hawkeye was actually an American of European descent.

PAUL SEEDHOUSE.

... Re Schubert and Keating Lookalike (Eye 1234). A good likeness but some musical pedantry for you – Schubert was in fact Austrian, not German. Keep up the good work though!

TOBY LEWIS.

... McLachlan's cartoon of slovenly penguins (p17, Eye 1234) was as amusing as ever. However, it intimated a grave misunderstanding of spheniscifom physiology. For in the lower left hand corner of the cartoon can clearly be seen a used prophylactic, or "condom", ad consuetudinem vulgarem. *I must point out, with some asperity, that no species of penguin would find use for such an article, since they lack intromittent male organs, in common with almost all birds except certain kiwis, cracids and screamers. Instead, male and female penguins mate by conjoining their "common orifices", or "cloacae".*

J FINICKITY-TWITCHER.

... I fear you may have succumbed to some Archer-like exaggeration. As lionhearted as George Mallory was, it is extremely unlikely that he died in 1925 (review of Paths of Glory) as he disappeared during the 8th/9th of June 1924.

DAVID BLACK.

... The continued publication of these letters simply encourages infantile behaviour and is bad for morale.

MAJOR LOOK
MAJOR STARE
MAJOR LUCY R. UNDERWEAR.

.... I think Pseudo Names is hilarious. It's my laughter therapy. It makes me laugh and laugh and laugh. Ha ha ha – there I go again, I just can't stop laughing.

NYE TRUSSOCKS-HYDE.

... Repeatedly threatening to close the Pseudo Names correspondence makes you about as popular as Richard the Third.

A. HORSE
A. HAWSE
MIKE INGDOM
FARRAH HAWSE.

... I am no longer prepared to pay airmail rates for your magazine to be sent to me in Moscow if you are going to continue to fill it with rubbish like this column. Please cancel my subscription.

I. VADINOV.

... I am appalled that you allow so many workshy immigrants and benefit-scrounging single mothers to waste my time with this Pseudo Names nonsense. Lock them up and throw away the key, I say. It's the only way to make Britain great again.

DALE (EMAIL).

... We've just been reading the Eye in the lounge at Gatwick Airport and we think that Pedantry Corner and Pseudo Names are both brilliant.

A. RIVALS and D. PARTURES.

... Calling for an end to Pseudo Names is futile. We've had a discussion and feel the point of no return has been reached.

RUBY CONN and MADGE ENO.

... Bless you for continuing Pseudo Names. It is one of the many things that make life worth living...

ANDY FINK
TOMMY SELF
WAT URE
WANDA FULWELL.

... I'm sorry but I won't be able to send you any Pseudo Names for the next issue – I'm washing my hair.

TIM O'TAY.

... A way to finish this column once and for all is to create a fictitious page in the magazine where you claim further entries will be continued.

PAIGE NINETYFOUR.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

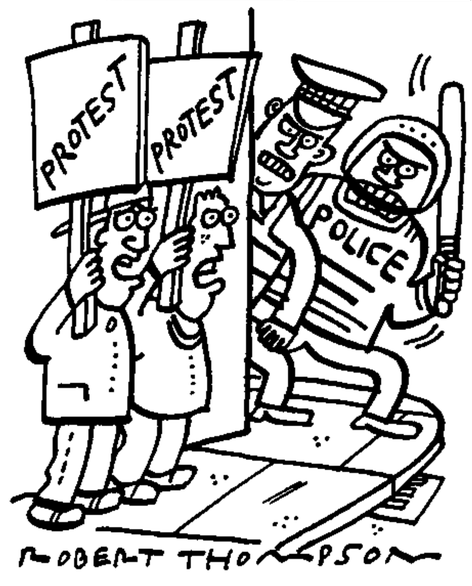
"Qualifying doesn't always tell us who has the quickest car, just who has the fastest car."
JAKE HUMPHREY, BBC
(Rob Asher)

"He [Ally Carter] has been in the final of this tournament before, and people often go on from there to win it..."
NEAL FOULDS, BBC
(Glyn Berrington)

"Ronaldo can pull anything out of the hat at the drop of a whim."
PAUL MASEFIELD, ESPN Asia
(Duncan Kaiser)

"It [a penalty decision] is one that could have gone either way – and did!"
CLIVE TYLDESLEY, ITV
(Tony Boyd)

"Oh no! Trouble-makers!"



"We have reason to believe you are planning to exercise your democratic right to protest"

Letter from **South Africa**

from Our Own Correspondent

WELCOME to the RSA, as adverts at South African airports boast. Last week's wham-bam election of our all-singing, all-dancing, "100 percent Zulu boy" Jacob Zuma demonstrates that this could easily stand for the Republic of South Amnesia.

For pale faces the comforting thing about this vicious general election is that we are no longer ritually denounced as "colonial stooges", "counter-revolutionaries" or even plain ol' racists. Instead, the comrades of the African National Congress (ANC) have been ripping each other's throats out using the same insults!

Part of the fun is to watch how black politicians suddenly suffer the same loss of memory as lily white S'eth Efricans. Not a single whitey, after all, ever supported apartheid or even served in the armed forces to shoot black township rioters.

Now the current crop of black politicians follow in our imperialist footsteps. All have conveniently forgotten anything that happened more than six months ago. Since the despotic Thabo Mbeki was turfed out last September, we've had the hilarious spectacle of his senior ANC allies forming a new gang and furiously rubbishing everything the ANC has done – which, naturally, was their own doing as they were recently in the cabinet.

The Congress of the People (COPE), their new party, is simply disgruntled Mbeki retreads. Chief renegade Mosiuoa Lekota even thundered against our massively corrupt arms deal. Till seven months ago he was, er, defence minister.

Jacob Zuma was the battering ram used by "leftists" in the ANC to batter the malignant Mbeki out of power. They and Zuma have had a high old time recalling Mbeki's criminal denial of HIV/Aids and cover-ups of the profligate arms deal.

Who was Mbeki's deputy when these evil crimes occurred? Zuma! But that's all arsenic under the bridge now that he's Mbeki's chief accuser. The ANC, forgetting everything it ever knew, has created a personality cult around Prez-to-be Zuma.

But perhaps the finest act of amnesia came from the ANC's own election manager, Fikile Mbalula. In the last week of the campaign Comrade Mbalula wrote a very angry open letter to Mbeki (still officially a party colleague). He accused his former boss of deliberately leading South Africa towards a "Banana Republic." Man, that the kind of racist stuff we whites are supposed to spew!

Politely no one mentions that during this ruinous slide towards Bananadom Fikile Mbalula was leader of the powerful ANC Youth League… but forgot to ring any alarm bells at the time. We're all on the amnesia roundabout now.

Once again this election shows: if you want a juicy job, there's only one game in town. Thus the problem remains: the ANC is in power – and is its own opposition.

Zuma, in turn, will suffer the same crisis. No sooner will he appoint a cabinet than those left out will do unto him what he did to Mbeki: plot and undermine. Fikile Mbalula, by forgetting his recent role as praise-singer for Mbeki, will doubtless be rewarded with a succulent ministerial portfolio – as will other ANC amnesiacs.

That's why the ANC is so paranoid. They may fail to remember most other things, but they know their most bitter enemies are those within: their own comrades.

By making Zuma a cult figure, "the one and only", his left-wing allies have also set him up for a mighty fall. We have not yet felt the chomp of the worldwide credit crunch. But when it bites here it will munch deep – and Zuma will become Public Enemy Number One.

For the moment the old rogue is bathed in glory, his manifold sins, inevitably, forgotten. We are now more interested to see if Zuma sings his raunchy trade mark jingle *Mshini wam* ("Bring me my machine gun") at his presidential inauguration.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "We're used to people fainting during these contests, but nobody has ever died before," Yelena Morozova told reporters in Chernyakhovsk (Kaliningrad), "so this was all rather unexpected. Boris had just eaten forty-three banana and cream pancakes, five more than his nearest rival, and he was about to accept first prize, when he suddenly starting gasping for breath. Foam was coming out of his mouth, and he went down like a sack of stones. A doctor in the crowd tried to resuscitate him, but by then it was too late. It was a great shame, because he had really enjoyed those pancakes."

Morozova was speaking after the death of forty-eight-year-old Boris Isayev, who had just won the pancake-eating competition that marks

the climax of the town's annual Maslenitsa (Pancake Week) festival. "We're not sure if Boris had a seizure or just choked on a piece of pancake," she continued. "The exact cause of death is not clear, but I can say that he was the most active participant in the contest. He ate all the types of pancake on offer, and won his prize fairly. After his body had been taken away in an ambulance, we carried on celebrating, because that's what he would have wanted. We probably shouldn't eat quite as much as we do, but after all, it is Maslenitsa." *(Novosti [Russia], 3/3/09. Spotter: Daniel S)*

● *"The outsourcing of American and European jobs to low-wage countries like India has been happening for years," Archbishop Jacob Thoomkuzhy told reporters in Kerala (southwestern India), "and religious outsourcing is no different. Because of a lack of priests in the industrialised world, prayers for the dead and Holy Masses are being paid for by Westerners, then offshored to India.*

"It's a lucrative business for churches in Kerala. Mass intentions that are paid for in dollars or euros are carried out here by local priests. The prayers are said, and the fees paid by Westerners help cash-starved parishes here. So what's the problem?

"For example, when British newspapers whipped up a storm about David Beckham's affairs, a Beckham fan from London paid £50 for a mass to save the soul of his hero. The Holy Mass, however, was not held in a London parish. It was outsourced by the church authorities to a bishop in India, who passed it to a remote church at Anthikad in Thrissur diocese, where the mass took place. We do not want to look at this commercially, but it is a huge boost to the local religious economy here."

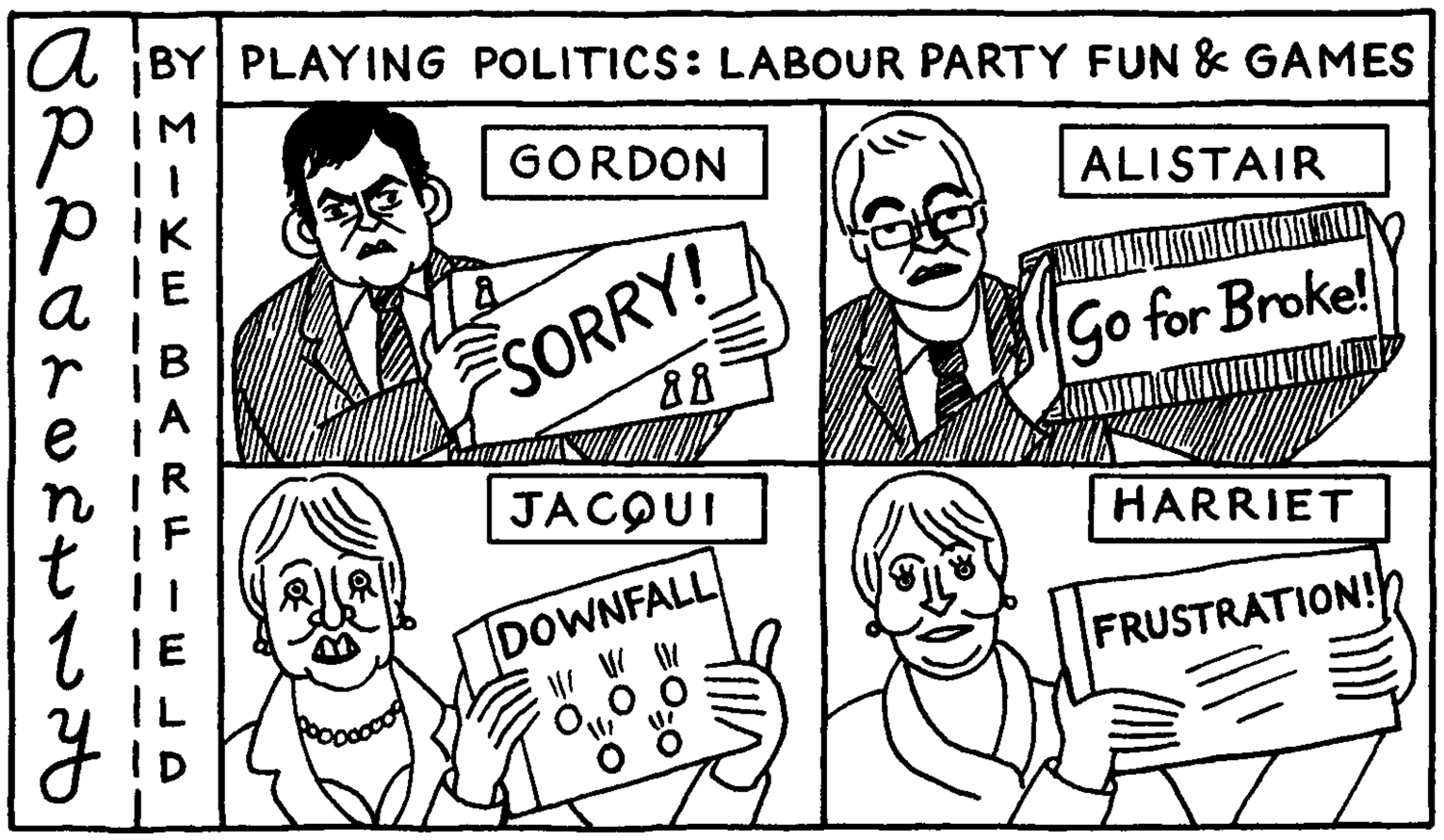
However, a spokesman for the British trade union Amicus reacted angrily when told of the practice. "The outsourcing of religious services and the saying of mass comes as a shock to us. This shows that no aspect of life in the West is sacred nowadays. " (SMC News, 30 March 2007. Spotter: Victoria Weeks)

– ● –

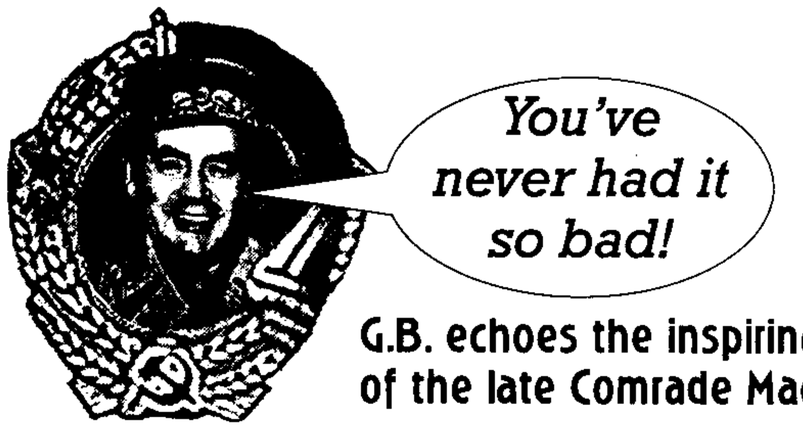
● "For this employee, it was a question of honour," a spokesman for the Komatsushima public bus company told a press conference in Tokushima Prefecture, Kyodo. "He was the man who had persuaded the bus company to start selling airline tickets, so when that part of the business began losing money, he felt personally responsible. He was in sole charge of the airline ticket agency division, and once he had realised that the commission made on the tickets could not cover the marketing costs, he began using his own money to cover up the deficit.

"Between September 2005 and July 2008, he paid a total of 880,000 yen of his own savings into the company account, and because nobody else checked the airline bills, the deception went unnoticed for three years. When we finally confronted him about what he had been doing, his only comment was 'It is unfortunate that this happened. I wish I could have discussed the situation sooner'."

The city authorities later decided to reimburse the 880,000 yen, and book it as an extraordinary cost in the 2008 financial statement. *(Japan Times, 6/2/09. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 43



G.B. echoes the inspiring words of the late Comrade Macmillan

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

All my life I have had only one ambition – to destroy the capitalist system and to smash the rich. And now, with the aid of my trusted lieutenant Commissar Darling, I have achieved my aim!

For too long Britain has been living off the ill-gotten gains generated by the parasites infesting the City of London – the Lehmanite-Goldman Sachsist banking nexus.

From now on, these loathsome reptiles will be cast into the dustbin of history. We are told that these jackals and vultures will go abroad, rather than pay Comrade Darling's paltry 50 percent tax rise and the long overdue abolition of their personal allowances.

If this is the case, as we are assured by their lackeys in the Rothermereist-Barclayite press, then so be it. Good riddance to them all, except of course those shrewd and experienced financiers whom I have personally appointed over the past ten years to assist me in making our British economy the envy of the world.

What some Comrades may have missed is the fact that the huge increase in revenue which will result from this insignificant tax increase (which will anyway affect only a very small number of people) will easily enable us to pay back the £175 billion (or is it trillion? Please check with AD) that we are having to borrow to pay for the increases in public spending required to ensure that our schools and hospitals are even better than they they are today.

Furthermore, the excellent budget which I asked Commissar Darling to read out has brought welcome news to Britain's growing number of unemployed. From now on they will have to pay NO TAX AT ALL ON THEIR INCOME.

Here is true Socialism in action!

Similarly, we have taken further drastic measures to curb the effects of global warming by imposing a punitive increase in the tax on tobacco. This will reduce the emissions of polluting gases into the atmosphere by an estimated 70 percent, and the vast sums raised (along with higher taxes on the noxious fumes given off by beer, wine and spirits) will go to providing 100,000 new wind turbines, to generate the electricity needed to power the 5 million People's Electric Cars which are due to be invented between 2013 and 2017.

Yes, indeed, Comrades, a new dawn is just over the horizon! Commissar Darling and I can assure you that, not only is the recession due to end on 12 October 2009, but the recovery will begin on 14 May 2010, three days before the next general election when the Supreme Leader will once again receive the wholehearted endorsement of a grateful people.

All stand. Solemn music (Chopin Funeral March, to be played by the Arthur Scargill Colliery Brass Band)

Yours,

Gordon Brown

Supreme Leader

Enemy of the People
Ex-Comrade Damian McBride

Never before have I felt so personally and wickedly betrayed as I have been by the snivelling, treacherous, two-faced, gutter-dwelling smearmonger McBride. He and his nefarious lickspittle running dog Draper have brought undying shame on the good name of our great Party by their loathsome attempts at black propaganda. How far these pestilential vermin have carried our Party from the once noble ideals which inspired us all in our mission to save humanity from the evils of neo-capitalist Blairite-Goodwinism.

While your Supreme Leader was spending every hour of every day working selflessly to safeguard the jobs and savings of hardworking British workers and their hardworking families, this venal duo were skulking in my office at Number 10, concocting a farrago of the vilest smears and slanders against our good friends the Tories.

Not for a moment would I have countenanced the spreading of such malicious fantasies as, for example, that Comrades Osborne and Cameron were gay lovers who engaged in group bondage sessions at the Bullingdon Club whilst dressed as members of the Black and White Minstrel Show.

This sort of outrageous smear, however true it may or may not have been and however credible some may think it to be, would never have been sanctioned by myself, no more than would the suggestion that Comrade William Hague was the secret lovechild of a Zulu chieftain and had contracted syphilis from a wildebeeste during an initiation ceremony in the Masai Mara game park, causing him subsequently to lose all his hair.

These unforgiveable if, in their own way, very persuasive canards were drawn to my attention by Comrade Campbell, who had come across them while surfing the internet in search of the names and addresses of certain Comrades in an attempt to establish where it was that they lived.

Comrade Campbell immediately realised how damaging it would be to the standing of the Supreme Leader if anyone were to think that these odious, vodka-sodden conspirators had any connection to the Supreme Leader other than the fact that he had personally appointed them and given them an office next to his own.

As soon as this was pointed out to me, I realised that I had to act immediately. Firstly, I had to make it abundantly clear that I had no connection whatever with these cunning dung beetles, and that when they invited themselves to luncheon at my country dacha, Chequov's, I had no idea who they were.

Secondly, as soon as it was suggested to me by Comrades Campbell and Mandelson that we had to cleanse our administration of any hint of Blairite spin-doctorism, I ordered that the drunken McBride should be sent into exile, where, as far as I am concerned, he can drink himself into an early grave.

Let this be a warning to all Comrades who seek to undermine our great movement by getting caught.

The Supreme Liar (surely "Loser"? Ed.),
G. Brown

A Correction by Comrade Lord Mandelson

For years I have been quoted as having said that "New Labour is intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich."

I would like to make it clear that I was quoted wholly out of context.

What I, in fact, said was, "New Labour is intensely relaxed about people getting extremely poor".

Please note that anyone who attempts to discredit me by repeating this vile slur will find their offices being raided by the officers of Commissar Jacqui Smith's highly-trained Anti-Terrorist Squad and charged with endangering the security of the state.

Two-Minute Hate

The former Leader, Ex-Comrade Blair, has the nerve to claim that he is in despair over our plans to impose a just and proportionate 50% tax increase on the overpaid capitalistic running dogs.

He accuses the Supreme Leader of betraying the New Labour Party and turning the clock back to the dark days of clausefourist classwarfareism.

Lies! Comrades do not have to look far to see the real reason for his anguished outcry – the vast riches he has amassed by exploiting his position as Former Leader, not to mention those of his wife, the hated Madame Blair!

Now he will have to pay some of them back to the people he has betrayed.

No wonder the snivelling jackal of American Adventurist Merchant-bankerism is in despair!

Perhaps he could follow the example of Comrade Sir Michael Caine and leave the country for ever! G.B.

The Supreme Leader's Tribute Delivered At The State Funeral Of Comrade Sir Clement Freud

We mourn today a man who was a great national treasure but who was above all the father of the PR man who is married to Comrade Murdoch's daughter.

I am therefore delighted to pay tribute to Comrade Murdoch, truly a colossus amongst men (cont. p. 94)

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Police are servants not masters says watchdog

u cant get the servant's these days! lol – ***Danny_Daz***

Police state? Yes, and one to be proud of! The test of a true democracy is the freedom to police, and Britain is a world class democracy with a robust police service built for purpose. As a Labour Party member I am disappointed by the unhelpful attitude of the opposition parties. If only they and their friends in the media displayed a fraction of the commitment and enthusiasm shown by the police. – ***Ros_Beeney***

comisioner of the met shuld of told brown the clown "NOT" on my beat sun-shine u go an meet ur g20 mate's in some1 elses country – ***Bankrupt_Britan***

its bash a bobby time again intresting that not one person complaning about the police made a citizans arest of an officer – ***Think_about_it***

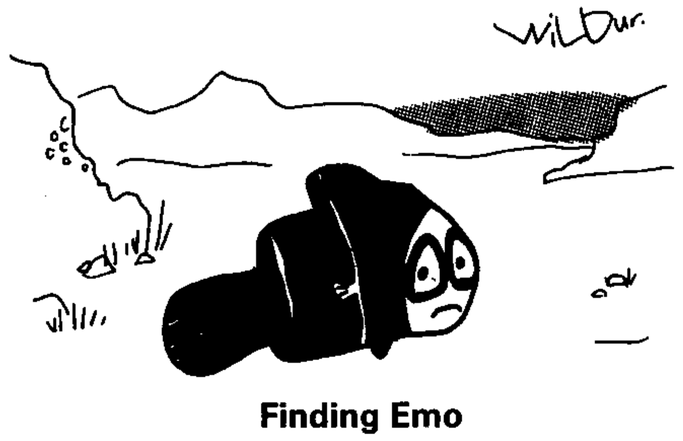
Being ex-job myself I am dismayed by the behaviour of the police. In my day we dealt with mobs like that in a couple of minutes – and when we hit them they stayed hit. Someone at Scotland Yard should bang a few heads together. – ***Brian***

i was there and i saw the police attack the crazy penis guy who goes on all the demos, he started shouting some made up language, probably brain damaged – ***1_World***

Thank you for your concern One World, but the language was Latin and my costume, as I explained recently in court, is not a penis. It is a giant finger, symbolising the wagging finger of the nanny state. On this occasion, however, it played an accusatory role, pointing the finger of blame at the financiers who have ruined our country. Unfortunately, during one "pointing" gesture I toppled over and accidentally broke a window at the Royal Bank of Scotland. This gave the police the perfect excuse to rough me up and confiscate my pamphlets. (These explain the connection between Gordon Brown, Sir Fred Goodwin, Barack Obama, Baroness Young and Osama Bin Laden.) – ***Edwin***

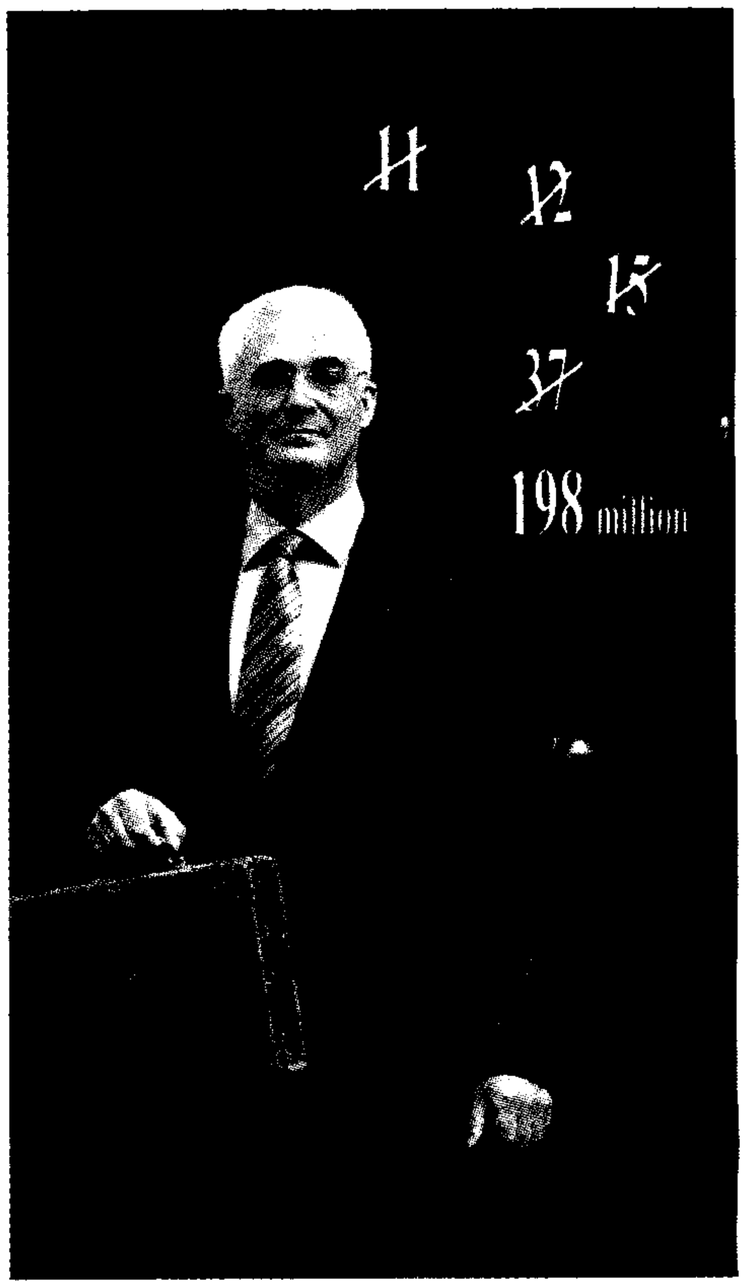
edwin can u rep 4 us in norf weezy bruv? – ***Zaks_bak***

Time to end the disastrous democratic experiment. – ***Sword_of_Truth***



Finding Emo

DARLING FIGURE SHOCK



FREE with today's Private Eye

Make the recession work for you

Ten top tips by the Eye's Crunch Busters

1 Buy trousers two sizes too small so you eat less to get into them. Average weekly saving: **£158**

2 Don't throw your shirt away just because there is a button missing. Learn to sew! It's easy! Average weekly saving: **£68**

3 Don't have a bath. Your body doesn't need one just to stay clean. A damp flannel will do the job. Average weekly saving: **£29** *(Depending on Local Water Company Tariff)*

4 Kill your dog. And eat it. Most dogs are expensive to keep yet highly nutritious. Ask any Korean! You'll be woofing it down. Average weekly save: **£49** per pet

5 Don't go into work. Pretend to be ill. You won't have to fork out for all those travel costs. Average weekly saving: **£111**

6 Jump off Tower Bridge and let the tide carry your financial worries away. And your loved ones won't even have to pay for your funeral. Average lifetime saving: **£370,402** *(That's enough tips, Ed.)*

FRUMPY SCOT AMAZES WORLD

by Our Showbiz Staff
Phil Airtime

IT JUST shows how deceptive appearances can be. From the moment the dumpy, wild-haired Caledonian stomped onto the stage, the critics and audience were preparing to snigger and to jeer.

But what followed was little short of stunning.

The wannabe Prime Minister with the weird smile and the appalling dress sense suddenly opened his mouth and out came a sound that no one had expected.

It was the word "Sorry". We were all left aghast, feeling a mixture of shame and amazement.

Briton's Not Talent

How could we have misjudged the dour, dowdy 57-year-old Celt so badly?

How could we have laughed so smugly when the amateur from Fife shyly claimed that he would like to be the next Tony Blair?

Yet, in the twinkling of an eye, the shy, never-been-loved-by-anyone Scot turned into an overnight political sensation.

"It was unbelievable," said one member of the audience, fighting back the tears. "You couldn't believe a word he was saying."

Gordon Is A Friend Of Moron

And now Gordon is hotly tipped to go all the way and lose the competition in spectacular fashion.

His entry has been posted on YouTube and has flashed around the world, receiving a remarkable total of no hits. Celebrities in Hollywood are not twittering about his extraordinary version of "sorry" and, to cap it all, he has not been invited on American TV's Oprah Winfrey show.

"It is like a fairytale come true," said one chastened critic. "A Grimm fairytale with a really unhappy ending where everyone dies and *(cont. p. 94)*

"I guess it's what he would have wanted"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Sir Clement Freud: Liberal MP, grandson of Sigmund Freud, dog food commercial star, *bon viveur* and panellist on *Just a Minute*

So. Farewell
Then Sir Clement
Freud.

Liberal MP,
Grandson of
Sigmund Freud,
Dog food commercial
Star, *bon viveur*
And panellist on
Just a Minute.

B-z-z-z-z-z!
"Repetition!"

Yes. That was
Your catchphrase.

And now you
Have no time
Left.

E.J. Thribb (17½ seconds left)

Mail columnist wins lifetime award

SIR MAX HASTINGS was last night honoured with the most prestigious award in British journalism – the William Rees-Mogg Memorial Award For The World's Worst Columnist.

At a glittering ceremony at London's Claridge's Hotel, the editor of the Spectator, Mr Mathew D'Ancona, praised Sir Max's "consistently terrible columns which have established a new low in the history of terrible columns".

In particular, Mr D'Ancona cited some of Sir Max's more celebrated pieces such as 'What's So Wrong With A Drop Of Rain?', 'Why Do We All Hate Wasps?', 'Let's Hear It For The Honest British Slug' and 'Who Says Watching Paint Dry Is Boring?'

"Columns such as these," the Spectator's editor went on, "will be read for centuries to come as instances of ***(cont. p. 94)***

Song At Twilight is one of Coward's lesser-known plays and also his last. Unlike the campness of Private Lives or Prison Laughter it has a more serious feel while still containing classic Coward wit.

Richmond & Twickenham Times

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

FEARS OF BRAIN DRAIN AS 50% TAX BITES

by Our City Staff **Claire Desk**

BRITAIN could lose some of its most gifted bankers, experts warned yesterday.

In what could be a disaster for the country, there could be a mass exodus of top city talent fleeing the punitive new 50p rate of tax introduced in the Budget.

Said one expert, "Are we mad? This country can ill afford to lose the people who have contributed most to the economic crisis. Do we really want to drive the likes of Sir Fred Goodwin into exile?"

"Come off it, Mr Brown," he said. "This will lead to the end of civilisation as we *(cont. p94)*

NATION PLEADS TO SAVE CAINE

'Don't Go, Sir Michael'

Thousands of Protestors March on Downing Street

by Our Budget Staff **Sue Pettax**

A TEAR-stained Joanna Lumley led nationwide protests yesterday, calling on the government to reverse their "shameful treatment" of Sir Michael Caine, who has threatened to leave Britain in disgust at Mr Darling's draconian tax measures.

Said Sir Michael, "I am 76 years old and I am still working every day whilst these layabouts are getting benefits. Not a lot of people know that – except for taxi drivers.

Caine Mutiny

"I have served this country faithfully through two world war films," he continued, "including *Five Days To Antwerp* and *Ice Station Limoges*, not to mention the 79th remake of *They Flew To Bruges Again*."

Get Carter Fuck

Sir Michael has, of course, made many other unforgettable and distinguished films, including the cold war thrillers *The Ludlum Memorandum Condundrum* and *The Quimby File*, as well as the mercenary epic *Wild Turkeys III* and the classic comedy thriller *The Cushy Job. (That's enough films. Ed.)*

Billion Dollar Drain

An all-night vigil was held outside the House of Commons, as Caine's fans fought with Tamil protestors and elderly Gurkhas to demand an immediate repeal of the tax laws that will save Sir Michael from his voluntary exile.

Old Jokes Revisited No.94

Britons flee 50% tax stunner

TALES OF THE ANCIENT ROMANS

No. XCIV BORUS JOHNSONIUS CINCINNATUS

IN THE early days of the Republic there lived a noble senator named Borus, respected for his oratory, erudition and his love romps with the beautiful nubian Princess Petronella.

The noble Borus won lasting fame when he drove the hated barbarian, Ken the Red, out of Londinium and established a golden era of peace and harmony in the capital. His work done, Borus retired to his smallholding in North Londinium and lived the life of a simple mayor, growing vegetables, cycling around the streets, drinking wine and surrounding himself with beautiful handmaidens.

The humble Borus had no ambition for higher office – except to be Prime Minister.

Said Borus to the adoring populace, "I will become your leader *only* if I am called – and even if I am not."

So saying, Borus rose from his labours, went down to the forum and stabbed his rival

Cameronus in the back.

"Et tu, Borus?" exclaimed the mortally wounded Cameronus.

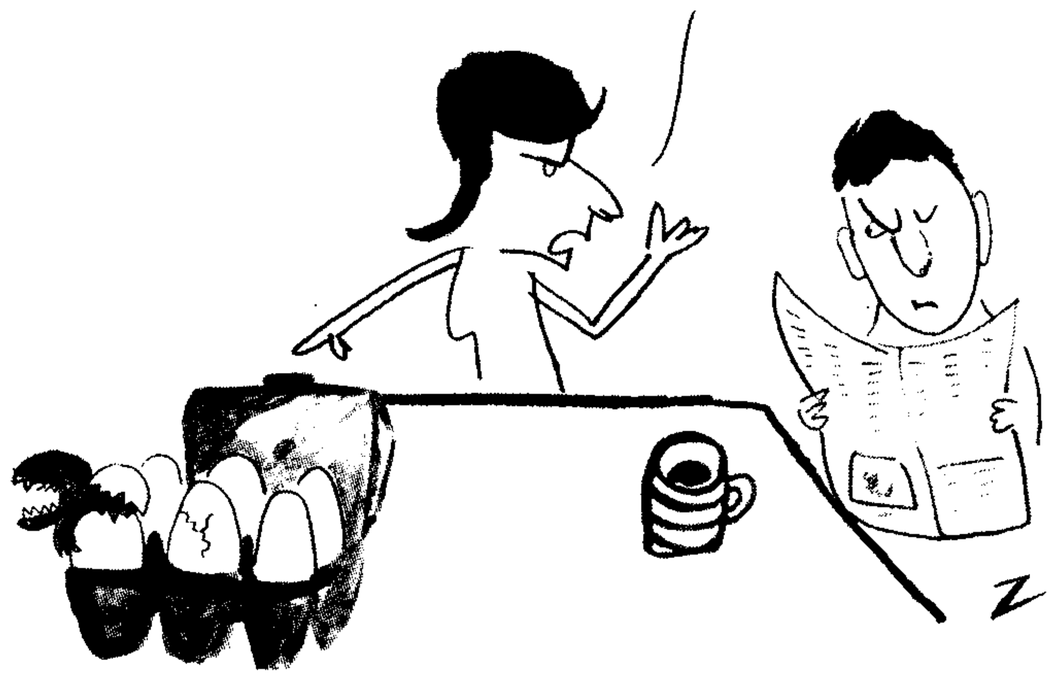
"Crikeyus!" said Borus. "That was easier than I thought."

So Borus became dictator and soon declared himself a god.

Adapted from *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* by Edward Gimson.

YES! IT'S BORIS DANCING!

I TOLD you they were WELL out of date!



£ BUDGET SPECIAL £

An At-A-Glance Guide To What The Darling Measures Will Mean For Mr And Mrs Average Briton

Thanks to Darling's need to borrow to make up the new deficit on public spending, every household in Britain will now owe **£170 billion**.

HOW IS THIS TO BE PAID FOR?

All adults will have to pay **100 percent** tax throughout their working life until the recession ends in 2034.

In addition, all their children lucky enough to find employment will have to pay **120 percent** tax until the first green shoots of recovery appear over the ruins of Canary Wharf in 2094, as huge, man-eating alligators roam freely through the mangrove swamps of East London due to global warming.

TRADE IN YOUR 10-YEAR OLD BANGER AND GET THE LATEST 'GREEN' MODEL IN ITS PLACE

HOW IT WORKS

OLD MODEL

USELESS, clapped-out, untrustworthy, rust-brown wreck.

NEW MODEL

NEW, exciting, green, electric, clockwork run-about (but not for long or very far)

That Budget Breakfast In Full

Freshly Squeezed Pips

– ❋ –

Choice of Cereal:
Fred the Shreddies, Credit Crunchy Nuts, Money Nut Loopies, Cheerios

– ❋ –

Egg on Face
Hash Browns (with pinch of salt)
Waffles

– ❋ –

Choice of Teas:
Earl Very Grey, Alistair Darjeeling
English Breakfast, Scottish Dogs Dinner

Budget Round-up

TOP RATE TAX TO 'INCREASE REVENUE

by Our Personal Finance Correspondent **Penny Less**

FORECASTERS say the Government's decision to introduce a new 50p tax rate for high earners could bring in as much as £2.1 billion of extra revenue in its first full year to accountancy firms specialising in tax avoidance.

"This will allow us to take on extra staff in these difficult economic times," said one accountant, smoking a cigar rolled on the thighs of Jacqui Smith, "plus it will provide a real shot in the arm to the hard pressed economies of Monaco and the Cayman Islands."

Alistair Darling immediately rejected these estimates saying he believed a far higher figure of £4.1 billion of tax would be avoided in the first year.

UNEMPLOYMENT TO PEAK IN 2010

THE Treasury last night confirmed budget predictions that unemployment would peak around May next year.

"That's when we expect a sudden surge in the number of Labour MPs signing on after having lost their jobs" said a Treasury *(cont. p. 94)*

Those Confident Alistair Darling Budget Predictions In Full

★ Growth of 1.25% in 2010 and 3.5 in 2011

★ 'Lesbian Vampire Killers' to win eight Oscars including Best Picture at the 2011 Academy Awards

★ John Prescott to win Miss World 2012 and follow that up by winning Miss Universe in 2013

★ Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling to replace Ant and Dec as hosts of 'Britain's Got Talent' in 2013

(That's enough "confident Darling budget predictions", Ed.)

"Maybe the maypole wasn't such a good idea this year"

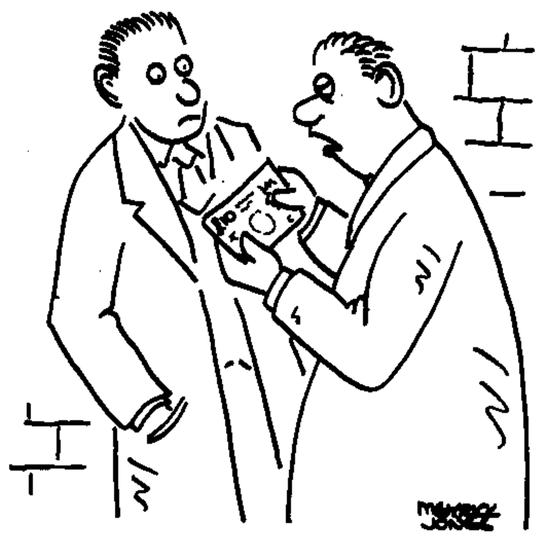
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE OSBORNE

Osborne: Darling's 50 percent tax rise is absolutely outrageous, indefensible and will destroy Britain's economy.

Interviewer: So, if you come to power, you will repeal it?

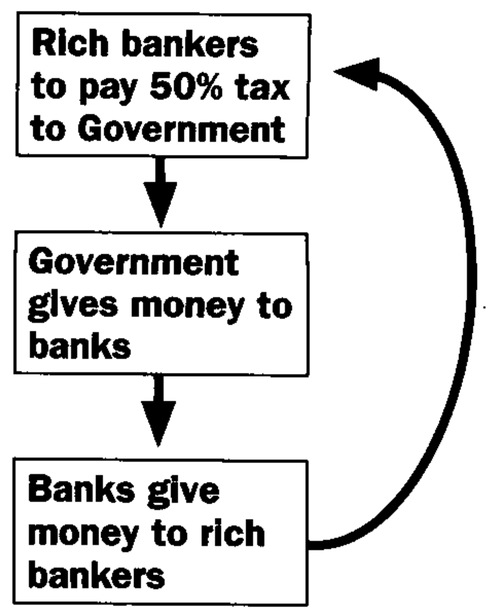
Osborne: Oh no, you can't catch me out like that! You're not going to trick me into promising to cut taxes.

(Cont. 2094)



"It's genuine. See, it says 'I aspire to pay the bearer...'"

The Economic Cycle Explained



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Sponsored by the DAFT Foundation – Drawing All Faiths Together

Founder: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA Oxon

Hi, you guys!

And special greetings, this Thetan Day, to all our brothers and sisters in the Scientology Community.

We may not share every detail of your beliefs, but, hey, isn't that what faith is all about?

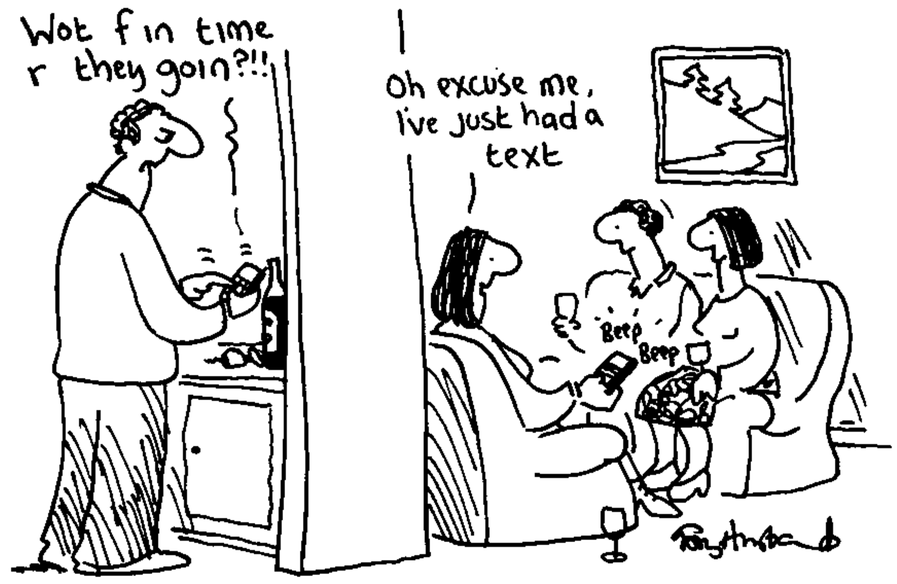
We may have different creeds, but we are all united in our desire to reach a common goal – love, happiness and world peace.

What's not to like? So, on this Feast of Xenu, let's all join hands and go forward together, with me at the head.

Have a nice day! Stay cool!

Rev. T. Blair

Chief Executive, D.A.F.T.
(former vicar of St. Albion's)



TOP TERRORISTS RELEASED WITHOUT CHARGE

by Our Crime Staff **Dawn Raid**

TWELVE of the world's most dangerous terrorists, who were arrested last month in the biggest police operation since records began, were today released without charge.

Said Inspector Knacker, head of the Anti-Terrorist Squad, "We had extremely strong evidence that these men were planning to unleash a reign of terror all across the Manchester and North-West Region.

"That is why we have decided to release them without bringing any charges.

"It is true," continued Inspector Knacker, "that an exhaustive search of the premises where these suspects were living revealed a large number of highly suspicious terror-related items, such as a bag of crisps, a packet of PG Tips, a used shampoo bottle and a sofa.

"If we had not acted as promptly as we did, we might have found some genuine terrorists."

● What Manchester's Al Qaeda cell might have been planning to blow up if they'd been planning to blow up anything at all.

1 Rio's. The city's number one nightspot. On a Saturday night it would have been packed to the doors and the death toll could have run into thousands.

2 The Rover's Return. The city's most historic pub and number one tourist attraction. On a Saturday night millions of people all over Britain would have been watching and they could all have died instantly.

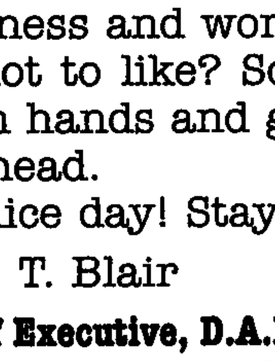
3 The London Eye. The terrorists could well have been planning to fool the police by choosing a target outside the Manchester area. If so, an obvious candidate would have been the London Eye. A small "dirty bomb" concealed in one of the "pods" could have wiped out the whole of South-East England.

BBC Radio 3

Opera Latest

New Glyndebourne Premier

Berlusconi's 'Il Gaffo'



The Robber Baron, Silvio, visits the victims of a recent earthquake. He sings the aria *'Bienvenuto al Camping Site'*, in which he exorts the homeless and dying to enjoy themselves by imagining that they are having a holiday under canvas.

In Act II the Baron's eye is caught by the beautiful aid worker Dr Tutti Frutti. He sings her the haunting solo *'Rumpo Pumpi con Me'* in which he implores the young maiden to give him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

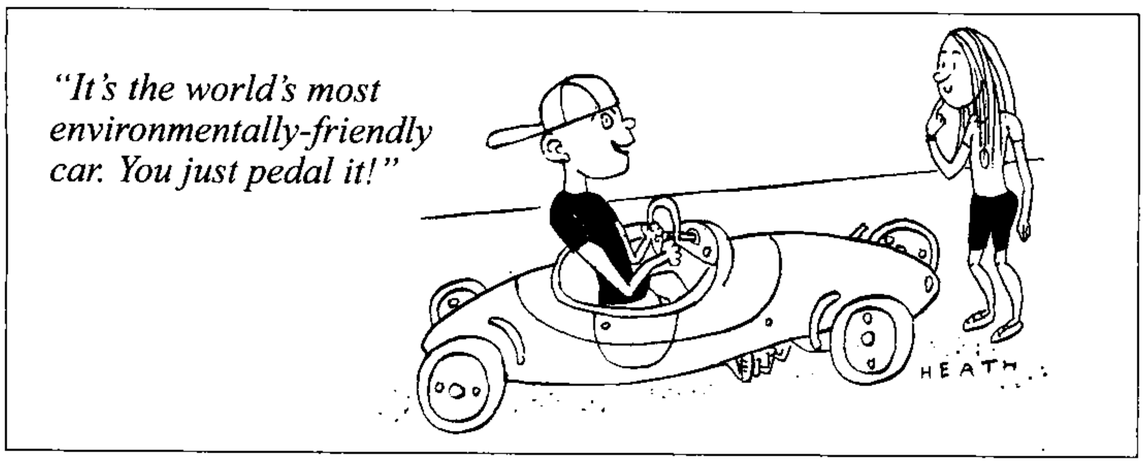
When she hears this, his wife the Baroness is furious and runs onto the stage with a pair of scissors, threatening to cut off his *(cont. Act III)*

Phil Spector's Wall of Brick

THE BROON-ITES — THE BONNY BAIRNS BUNGLING THE BUDGET!

Fountain and Jamieson

YE CANNAE BE SERIOUS, PA BROON...
...A 50 PERCENT TAX ON THOSE EARNING 150 GRAND A YEAR?
BUDGET
PILLS
YE'LL HAVE A MASS EXODUS O' RICH SCUNNERS OOT THE COUNTRY BEFORE YE CAN BOAK!
AND HURRAH FER THAT, HILARY BROON...!
HOW ELSE ARE WE GAEN TAE GET RID O' THE TORIES AFORE THE NEXT ELECTION?
JINGS!
ABSENT ARISTOS
BANKER-FREE BENCHES
HENRY DAVIES



THE TUDOR TIMES

'Scottish Play' Opens

by Our Theatrical Staff Charles Edmund Spencer

MR WILLIAM Shagspaw's new tragedy, MacBroon, last night packed Ye Global Recession Theatre to its rafters (except that it hasn't got any).

As ye curtain rose, we saw a brooding Scottish psychopath planning to murder his country's leader Duncan Blair.

When he has finally steeled himself to commit the evil deed (after ten years of bitter soliloquising), MacBroon imagines that he will enjoy many years of power on the throne.

But, alas, a spectre intervenes at the feast. It is the Royal Banquo of Scotland, with a long line of other Banquos who have all perished in mysterious circumstances.

Everything goes wrong as MacBroon's kingdom falls apart. Finally, as has been foretold by the three witches (Hazel, Jacqui and Harriet), 'Andy Birnam Wood' comes to Anfield Stadium, where he is booed off the field.

MacBroon has now lost his wits, and pronounces "Is this a dagger I see in my back?"

In a final memorable speech he declares, "Tomorrow and tomorrow

and tomorrow, the recovery will begin."

But it is too late. Onto the stage springs the young Scottish laird Cameron McDuff, who lays claim to the crown, leaving MacBroon a corpse at his feet.

Many of last night's audience found Master Shockspure's new offering too depressing for words and advised him to stick to comedies such as 'Twelfth Nightclub' where Prince Harry is seen becoming inebriated at the Boujis Tavern (cont. p. 94)

From Gnome Souvenirs

THE SUSAN BOYLE MEMORIAL PLATE

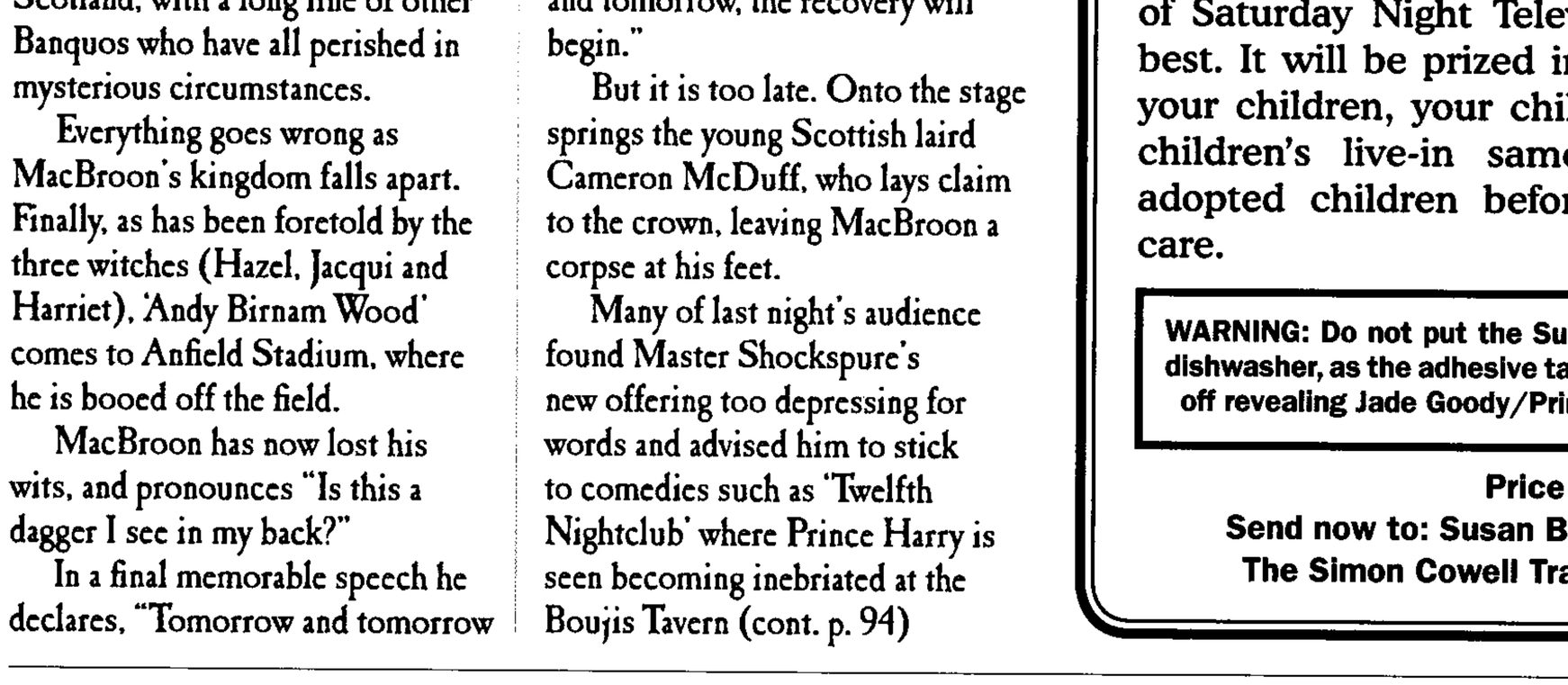
Now, captured for all time, the moment when Susan Boyle won the hearts of the nation in the most moving three minutes of television that has ever been seen.

Made by the master craftsman Taki Ree Pof in his Shanghai workshop, this priceless heirloom is not only a valuable investment against the credit crunch, it is also a heartwarming memento of Saturday Night Television on ITV at its very best. It will be prized in generations to come by your children, your children's children and their children's live-in same-sex partner's ex-wife's adopted children before they were taken into care.

WARNING: Do not put the Susan Boyle Memorial Plate in the dishwasher, as the adhesive tape integral to its design may peel off revealing Jade Goody/Princess Diana image underneath.

Price £99.99

Send now to: Susan Boyle Plate Offer, Unit 94, The Simon Cowell Trading Estate, Droitwich.



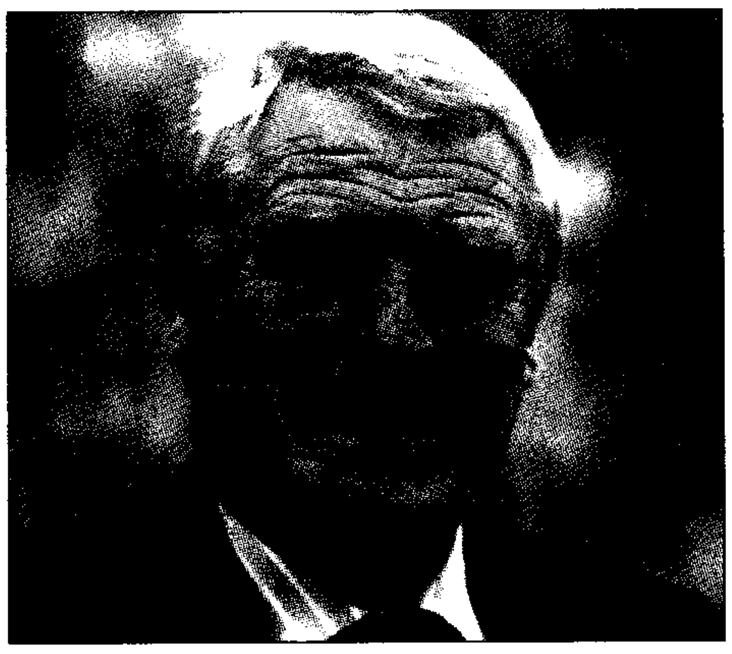
TV Preview

Ashes To Ashes

9.00pm: Anonymous policeman not carrying ID

New series of the time- slip police drama that makes us nostalgic for the days of no-nonsense coppers when officers broke the rules, took law into their own hands, used violence indiscriminately... hang on, is this a documentary?

DIARY



PADDY ASHDOWN

I have known few more congenial experiences than crouching in the jungle of Sarawak, chewing on a live toad and lobbing hand-grenades at the more troublesome of the local terrorists.

The life of a Royal Marine is tough, certainly – but it also offers a great deal of fun. A decade later, when I first entered the House of Commons, I must say I found the experience something of a disappointment. This is not to say I had not come prepared. The opposite applies. Highly-trained in the art of camouflage, I had blacked-up my face and donned a green suit, allowing me to perch unnoticed on the Liberal benches. By happy chance, there was a gap to my left, so I made the effort to construct a makeshift latrine from some sand and some rubber piping I had brought with me. I had also brought along plentiful supplies of grub and was confident that I could survive in that position for a matter of days, even weeks.

But I had made one significant mistake, and it was to cost me dear. I had reckoned without the interminable interruptions that take place in the Chamber. Every few minutes, an MP would climb to his feet, raise his head above the benches and talk at length about this, that or the other. Without my high velocity SLR 7.62 rifle to pick them off, I soon found myself under-occupied and bored. So I decided I should do something useful and take control of the Leadership of my party. Luckily, by that stage I was hugely proficient in unarmed combat. A rabbit-punch to the dependable Alan Beith, a thumb and forefinger to the pressure-points of the gifted Ming Campbell and a series of Chinese burns to the redoubtable David Steel, and I had soon achieved my aim.

The only task that remained was to press forward my advantage by entering Number 10 Downing Street and taking control of that building and surrounding areas.

But I had made one fatal error. I had reckoned without the formidable stalling tactics of Mr Tony Blair.

I here reproduce a memo I issued to him at the time.

Dear Tony,

I believe you have many of the talents necessary to make a better-than-average Prime Minister.

Well done. But this is no reason for complacency. Far from it. I have looked into the matter and this I know. By harnessing my skills, you could do a great deal better.

It is for this reason that I have decided to issue you with this five-point plan for getting our great country out of the trouble it is currently in.

PROBLEMS:

a) Though commendably competent in many minor areas, for which you have my blessing, you possess no long-term vision for this country.

b) You are standing in the way of someone better suited than yourself to govern.

SOLUTIONS:

1) Vacate your office. Get out now. For the long-term good of the country, you are better off somewhere else.

2) Before effecting your departure, appoint P. Ashdown to the vacant position. Not to do so would, I believe, come to be seen as the greatest act of moral failure of this or indeed any other time.

3) Be applauded by future generations for your wisdom, your selflessness and, most important of all, for knowing when to go.

Yours ever,
Paddy (Ashdown)

Looking back, I recognise the fact that Blair, for whom I have, and retain, a very high regard, failed to take up a number of my suggestions. Nevertheless, I take pride in the knowledge that, between the two of us, we made very real progress in realigning the politics of this country. My influence was undeniable. As proof of this, Blair invited me to Downing Street on no less than three occasions in less than ten years – on one of which I was delighted to meet the actress Penelope Keith, of whom I have long been a great admirer. And I have it on good authority that the Prime Minister might have read anything up to 80% of my subsequent memorandums, pamphlets and top-secret policy reviews, including my keynote document detailing my plans for the re-invasion of the Isle of Wight were it to fall into enemy hands. By anyone's reckoning, this is no small achievement.

Reading through my diaries, I come across notable pen-portraits of the many memorable and distinguished characters I encountered in my years in office:

Margaret Thatcher: "The first female Prime Minister. A formidable character."

President Bill Clinton: "Unquestionably American. When we met, I held out my hand for him to shake. I like to think I set him at his ease."

Saddam Hussein: "A formidable opponent. Bearded."

HM the Queen: "A monarch and a mother, but also, I would guess, a formidable character in her own right."

Gordon Brown: "Chancellor of the Exchequer. My sources strongly tip him as Blair's successor. Do I detect a Scottish accent?"

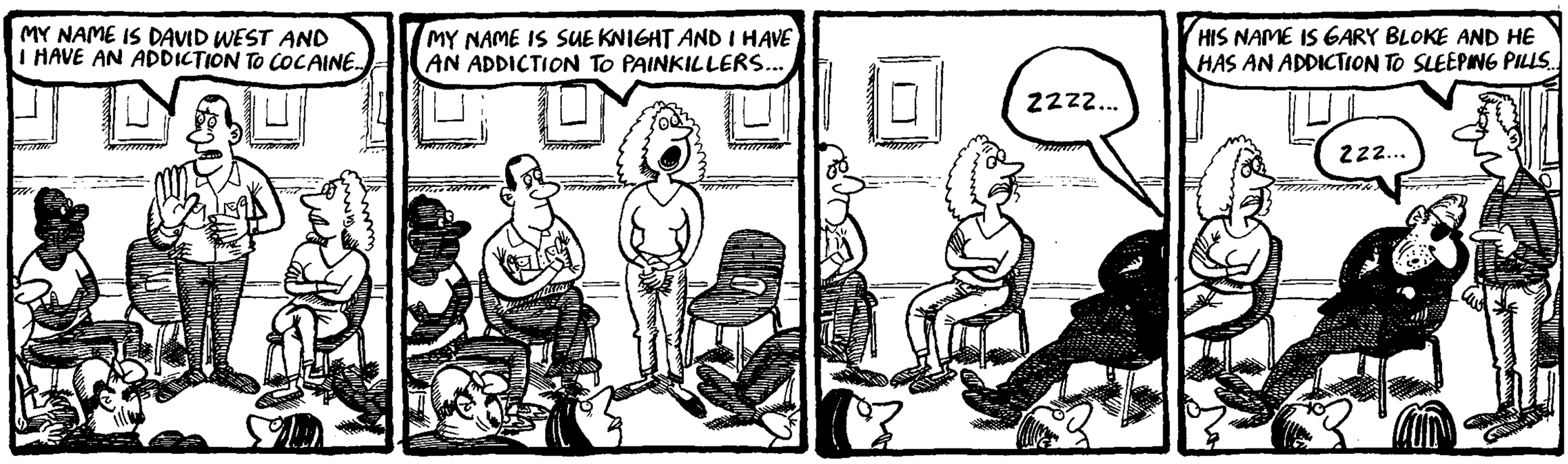
Dr David Owen: "Two fingers thrust into his eyes would, in my judgement, blind the man instantly. One could then slit his throat with one's teeth and effect a getaway within a matter of seconds. Not to do so would, I fear, be the greatest moral lapse this country has made for a quarter of a century."

Mine has indeed been a life of action, but, in retirement, there are many ways I also relax. Scrabble, for instance. When I have nothing better to do, I climb the Mount Snowdon and enjoy a game of Scrabble on the summit. Playing cards, too, can be effective, particularly if one sharpens the edges and hurls them at a 180-degree angle. I also keep goldfish, primarily for swallowing when stocks run low (though their tails do wag in the throat), and I continue to hold football in high regard. The last time I played football, the referee attempted to send me off for shooting at the ball with a pump-action revolver, but I argued forcefully that the true Liberal Democratic principle holds that decisive action, however brutal, can help to prevent far worse.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


MY NAME IS DAVID WEST AND I HAVE AN ADDICTION TO COCAINE..
MY NAME IS SUE KNIGHT AND I HAVE AN ADDICTION TO PAINKILLERS...
ZZZZ...
HIS NAME IS GARY BLOKE AND HE HAS AN ADDICTION TO SLEEPING PILLS..
ZZZ...

Literary Review

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

Frances Partridge: The Biography

Anne Chisholm

(Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £25)

THE advent of the Second World War would offer the sternest test of the values that Bloomsbury held dear. Almost immediately the first of many crises presented itself when Ethel Furbelow (*"Mademoiselle fourrure-dessous"* as Frances and Ralph amusingly nicknamed her), the maid-of-all-work at their agreeable Wiltshire residence Wiseacre Cottage, gave notice of her intention to leave their employ for a munitions factory on the very day that Frances was due to read a paper to Bloomsbury's prestigious Trifle Club on the hitherto unexplored subject of Lytton Strachey's maternal great-aunt.

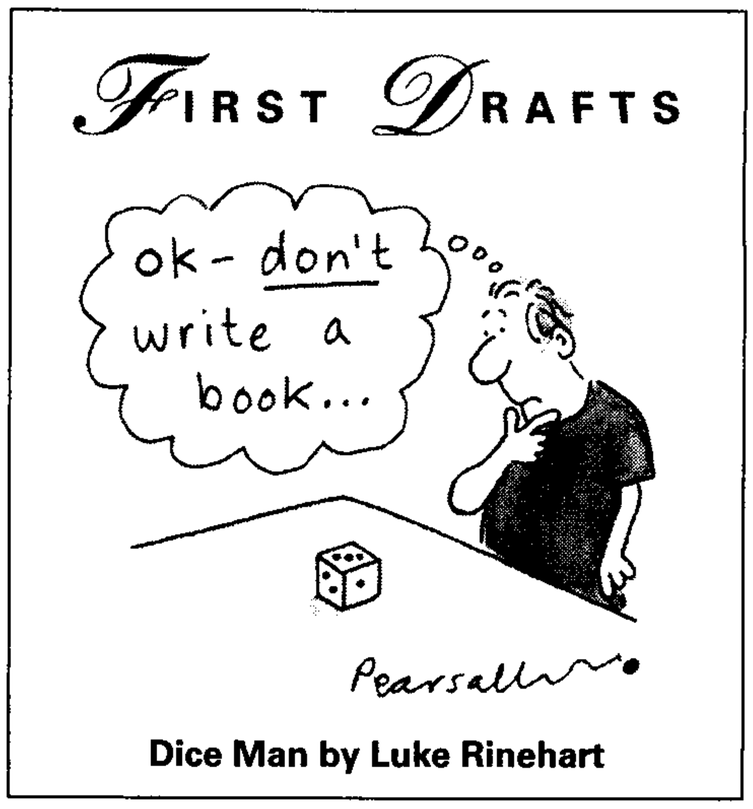
Quietly furious ("The silly woman should remember that her first duty is to civilising principles and not to making aeroplanes in which a lot of bestial young men can fly around killing each other, rot them"), Frances resolved to make the tea and hand round the Bath Oliver biscuits herself. The evening, she recorded in her diary, was a triumph ("The sight of Venetia's sweet pale face under the shadow of the rhododendrons as we discussed whether Lytton's sleeping with Bobo was actually a betrayal of Constantia or an humane act of reconciliation brought home to me all the things that it is important not to fight for. I felt that I had made a small, yet infinitely important point"), although she notes that she was "terribly shaken" by Lady Stultitia Blodwyn's contention that "battle dress is really rather fetching".

Was all that Bloomsbury stood for to be carelessly flung into jeopardy? Frances was honest enough to admit that the behaviour of certain of their friends deeply shocked her. When the young balletomane Cyril Simper was to enlist in the Sadler's Wells Rifles (remarking that he would "list for a lancer, for who will sleep with the brave?"), she was roused to fury ("it is simply a self-pleasing gesture, what Virginia in her devastating way would call the bath of least resistance"). What was needed, she believed, as the Panzers swept west over the Maginot Line, was rational discussion and mutual acceptance of opposing points of view. The arrest and internment of the Fifth Columnists Sir Hugo Jackboot and his wife Lady Fruitella, with whom they had enjoyed so many summer picnics on the lawn at Rantingdon, brought her no comfort ("It is simple barbarism. If Hugs and Fruity want Germany to win, why shouldn't they be allowed to say so, I wonder?")

Neither did public disquiet over Lord Howler's inflammatory broadcasts on Berlin Radio ("I can't say I like the man, but he is undoubtedly sincere in what he believes. Of course, the asses can't see that"). Sometimes the war seemed painfully close, as on the occasion when a soldier from a platoon passing through the village knocked at the door and asked if she could spare a tea-bag. "Frankly the sight of his silly, red, pert and somehow condescending face made me feel quite sick. I wished Ralph had been there to impress upon him the consequences of his folly, but alas he was on the telephone to his stockbroker."

But Bloomsbury, for all the strains imposed on its way of life and its traditional recreations, was still Bloomsbury. In a landscape of Stygian darkness, some beacons still shone hesitantly through the murk. The decision of the distinguished novelist Milo Camp, author of *Dadie, I Hardly Knew You* and *Dividend Payment*, to leave his wife's deathbed for the solace of the much younger Sadie Dinge brought a certain amount of soul-searching ("We decided that it was important Milo should feel himself valued at this difficult time, that there was no point in criticising a state of affairs of which we were ignorant, and of course everyone knows what Milo is like").

In December 1941 ("The Americans have entered the war – of course this is simply frightful") she was able to record that she and Ralph had discussed Freudian analyses of dreams ("He maintained that a forest, of course, represented pubic hair; I said what if it were just a forest?") and written a very interesting article for the *New Statesman*. "It seems to me that if we can preserve one civilised outpost amid the reek and decay of our civilisation, then we shall have been true to ourselves in a way with which Lytton and Virginia would readily have sympathised... [*continues for a very long time*]



Dice Man by Luke Rinehart

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ IT WAS foreseen that the arrival of new editors at both the *Independent* and *Independent on Sunday* would have an impact on literary coverage – and the *Indy*'s books pages have duly been forced to be less distinctive, while the *Sindy*'s lit ed, Suzi Feay, has been relieved of the thankless task of cultivating a tiny, hard-to-find allotment in the paper's Review section with equally skimpy resources.

Less predictable was the decline at the *Telegraph* titles, where the plethora of weekend supplements and online initiatives scarcely suggests poverty. Yet brutal downpaging means the *Sunday Telegraph* now wretchedly averages only four hardback reviews per issue (and was ominously down to three on Sunday 26 April) – much the same as the tabloid *Mail on Sunday*, but with less entertaining reviewers. Until the slashing started, it was not far behind the *Sunday Times*'s average of 12 full-size reviews, and its critics were often as good.

■ THE *Independent*'s name seems a glaring misnomer whenever its executives commandeer space to write about South Africa, where Tony O'Reilly's IN&M group is the largest newspaper publisher and has a long-standing alliance with the ANC.

O'Reilly himself urged readers to "Keep believing in the new South Africa" in 2006; and last year his UK chief executive Ivan Fallon was opining that "Mbeki did not deserve his fall". Reviewing RW Johnson's *South Africa's Brave New World* tut-tuttingly in his own paper's books section this month, Fallon – who won a job with the Irish tycoon not long after producing an admiring biography of him, and spent eight years as his South African viceroy – stuck loyally to the upbeat company line.

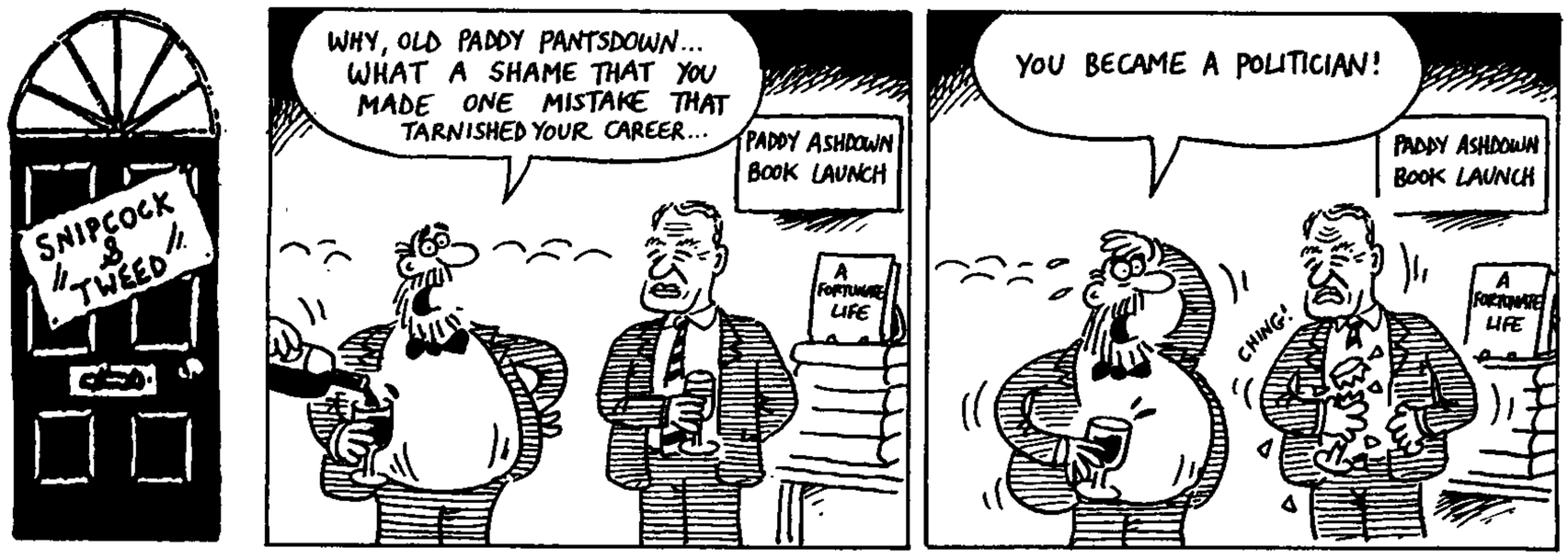
No counter-argument was advanced, no specific errors (apart from a sniffy reference to one academic turned minister) was criticised: it was enough to woollily lament that Johnson "lets his sense of gloom destroy any attempt at detachment or impartiality. The word 'bitter' comes to mind as probably the best word to describe the pervading spirit of this book."

Any other reviewer, you suspect, would have been asked to be more rigorous; and certainly only the boss would have been allowed to get away with that horrible last sentence.

■ JOHN BANVILLE extolled John Gray's arguably rag-baggy *Gray's Anatomy* in the *Guardian* this month ("elegant, witty, incisive"), as he did the same author's "brilliant, frightening, devastating" *Black Mass* in 2007 and his "Swiftian" *Heresies* in 2004.

The philosopher gets puff-quotes he can flourish from this serial slavering – Banville's adjectives dominate the paperback jacket of *Black Mass*, as they were no doubt intended to do – but it's a symbiotic relationship in which the novelist also benefits, and not just through the joy of championing a chum.

"I was put on to [Simenon] by the political philosopher John Gray," said Banville in discussing how he came to also write as Benjamin Black. And as the slim Black crime stories are essentially Simenon transposed to Dublin, Gray could be seen as key to his friend's lucrative second career as a commercial novelist.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
WHY, OLD PADDY PANTSDOWN... WHAT A SHAME THAT YOU MADE ONE MISTAKE THAT TARNISHED YOUR CAREER...
PADDY ASHDOWN BOOK LAUNCH
A FORTUNATE LIFE
YOU BECAME A POLITICIAN!
PADDY ASHDOWN BOOK LAUNCH
CHING!
A FORTUNATE LIFE

■ SECONDS out for the next round in the welterweight slugfest between Observer pundit Nick Cohen and Peter Hitchens of the Mail on Sunday.

Hitchens, who was recently dismissed by Cohen as "utterly mediocre", has a new book out on 11 May, *The Broken Compass: How British Politics Lost Its Way*. One of the longer entries in the index is for a certain *Observer* columnist.

Here are just a few of the references: "Cohen, Nick: accused of turning into P. Hitchens; adulation of A. Blair by; appears to accept official version of Iraq War; denounces anti-war marchers; misrepresentation by; no great distance travelled by; shares utopian view with neo-conservatives" – and, perhaps most damning of all, "unlikely alliance with Charles Moore".

Fight fans will be glad to know that Hitchens also finds time for a quick swipe at a *Mail* colleague: "Oborne, Peter... borne away by bleating flock."

Boys! *Boys!*

'Bookworm'

LIBRARY NEWS

■ SCHOOL librarian Jacqueline Crockford will take her former employers to court this summer after another school pushed out books and expertise in favour of computers.

West Bridgford School in Nottingham became a foundation school in 2005, opting out of local authority control. At that time the school had an excellent, well-stocked library, with a librarian and two assistants and a popular pupil reading scheme shadowing the Carnegie Awards, which had won praise from literacy experts.

But the new headteacher had plans for the space that was being taken up by around 10,000 books. Half the library became the school's learning support department, while 30 PCs were squeezed into the remaining half. Obviously the books had to go, as did the assistants.

Then Jacqueline was unwell in July 2007 and was dismissed while she was off sick, after eight years' service to the school. The library remained closed until March 2008. A room called "the library" is now open, but it has around half as many books and is run by a "learning resource assistant" with no library experience or qualifications. Jacqueline's tribunal case is due to be heard in July.

Last year, *Eye* 1223 reported on the closure of the school library at the Meadows Community School in Chesterfield. Librarian Clare Broadbelt was told she was no longer needed as the school would "manage resources from the internet" instead.

Author Alan Gibbons of the Campaign for the Book said: *"We need a broader debate about the role of school libraries. There are voices proclaiming the Virtual Learning Environment and 'paperless schools' as alternatives to books and libraries. The Campaign for the Book believes that these moves to downgrade reading for pleasure are retrograde and short-sighted."*

HIGH PRINCIPALS

STUDENT fundraisers hit the phones to raise £252,500 for the University of St Andrews in its latest fund-raising drive – which should pay for just over a third of the work needed to turn the School of Art History back into a plush 10-bedroom residence for new vice-chancellor Louise Richardson.

Richardson arrived at St Andrews from Harvard's Radcliffe Institute, promising to bring with her American-style fundraising, looking for big philanthropic donations. But the university will need the cash simply to fund its residence-hopping chiefs.

Former V-C Brian Lang moved out of the traditional residence building in 2001, to a £400,000 new property bought by the university, and the art history department moved in. Now the department is on the move again and the university plans to spend £750,000 on renovating the building to turn seminar rooms back into bedrooms for Richardson and to provide official reception rooms and guest accommodation.

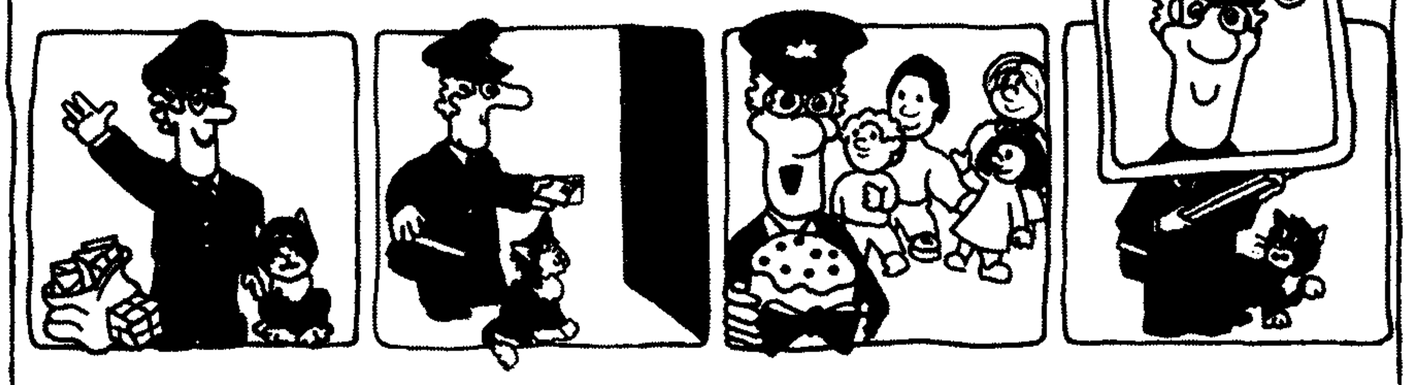
FORMER vice-chancellor Simon Lee continues to receive his £300,000-a-year salary while on gardening leave after being ousted from Leeds Metropolitan University earlier this year (*Eye* 1230). Now university credit card statements have revealed that Leeds Met paid for his wife's exotic trips.

Patricia Lee's voyages, revealed by an FOI request from the *Yorkshire Post*, include visits to Bangkok and Ethiopia, as well as going on a three-day activity trip to Bavaria, which she had the nerve to write about on the university website, describing how she was helped to overcome her fear of cycling and calling the visit to Schloss Neuschwanstein "the realisation of a teenage dream". Patricia Lee is not an employee of the university.

The university has begun an investigation after £5m was found to have been spent on the university's credit cards (not all by the Lees), including purchases of champagne, Wembley tickets and flights.

● NEWS that the University of Westminster is to drop its BSC in homeopathy has been welcomed by science campaigners. The move came just weeks after a review called for "more science content" in the university's complementary and alternative medicine courses (*Eye* 1230).

Case Notes Postman P.



Postman P. has an anankastic disorder (O.C.D personality). He enjoys the ritual & order of his calling, finds safety & comfort in his uniform & routine. He has made a world of orderliness. As is often the case, this has become more pronounced with age. His more exuberant exchanges are performed through his cat 'J' whom he is never without & who is an externalised 'vent' for his personality. Lately, there has been a marked deterioration in his condition. A series of events – escaped sheep, spilt sand, a birthday party – have kept him from his strict routine. The petty adventures of the villagers of Greendale have pushed him to the brink. **Postman P.** is in danger of 'going postal'.

Sionc Baddiel
Literary Psychologist

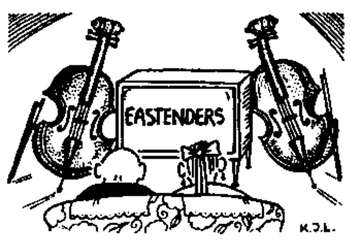
I love the way he uses the f-word in The Thick of It. *There is a real poetry to it. You know like 'what's the story in Bala-f---ingmory?' The 'f---ing' is so well placed there, giving an almost Rabelaisian lyricism to the obscenity.*

DAVID BADDIEL on Armando Iannucci, *Daily Telegraph*

This heroic 1967 structure became famous in Michael Caine's 1971 movie Get Carter. Scarcely has provincial concrete been so touchingly heroic.

STEPHEN BAYLEY on the Trinity Square car-park, Gateshead, 'Secret Britain', *Guardian*

We did an hour's cello duets, then an hour of East Enders – a blissful evening for us, both intellectually and emotionally challenging.



MICHELE HANSON, *Guardian*

The Personal Finance Society's 2009 Annual Conference & Chartered Awards Dinner

A new conference format is being introduced this year which will celebrate the evolution of professionalism in financial advice. As well as being the bicentenary of Charles Darwin's birth and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his seminal work *On the Origin of Species*, 2009 will see the FSA's Retail Distribution Review (RDR) reach its conclusion, with the objective of driving a further step change in the professionalism of its financial advice.

Invitation sent by the Personal Finance Society

Jamie Oliver and wife Jools leave the Portland Hospital, central London, with their newborn daughter Petal Blossom Rainbow, their third girl after Poppy Honey and Daisy Boo.

Photo caption, *Daily Telegraph*

You've got black and Italian ancestry. How important is your mixed-race ancestry to you?

Very important. There's multiculturalism in everything I do. The name of my company is One Race. Before my time, it was Sidney Poitier or Harrison Ford. There was no role model representing a multicultural universe. By becoming a multicultural movie star and embracing the ambiguity of my role. I was able to speak to millions of our generation.

VIN DIESEL, *London Metro*

One thing that has altered since we last spoke is that I no longer have the zeal of the newly anointed in the realm of effortless promiscuity. I think, well that can happen, but I try not to do it for the sake of it... They come to the stage door. They make an effort, like salmon swimming upstream.

RUSSELL BRAND, *The Times*

CONTRIBUTORS: Ian Wright (and others), James Archer, Tom Cornish, Chris Kelsey, Robert Galgut, Tony Nicholls, Tim Hopkins.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

LOCKERBIE APPEAL

Clutching at Straw

HOW convenient for the US and UK governments that Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, the Libyan unreliably convicted for the Lockerbie bombing, has contracted terminal prostate cancer while in prison in Scotland.

Megrahi has always maintained he will never return to Libya until his name is cleared and the truth emerges about the blowing up of Pan Am 130 in December 1988. But Jack Straw, the justice secretary, has now stuck two fingers up at MPs and peers on the human rights select committee and refused their request to delay ratification of a deal which will allow the transfer of prisoners between the UK and Libya.

Thus the treaty is to be sealed as Megrahi's lengthy appeal against his conviction for the bombing and killing 270 people gets underway this week. How long it will be before his deteriorating health dictates that he return to Libya to die with his family is not known.

There are no UK nationals in Libyan jails to benefit from the deal; and although there are 26 Libyans in British prisons, no one doubts the treaty is entirely about Megrahi, the only Libyan serving a sentence for terrorist offences. Straw told the human rights committee he could not delay ratification beyond Easter – thus denying it time to properly scrutinise the deal – because he didn't want to upset Britain's new best friends, the Libyans.

Justice and the families of the dead would be best served if Megrahi were sent back to Libya and his appeal continued in his absence. But the terms of the transfer deal dictate that there can be no outstanding litigation. So if Megrahi returns to Libya, he first has to abandon his appeal. That would suit the respective governments and those responsible for the travesty of a trial, which saw Megrahi jailed for life 12 years ago. The Justice Ministry stresses that any final decision over Megrahi rests with "Scottish ministers and Scottish ministers alone" – but they will no doubt be as pleased as the UK and US to be shot of the case.

It remains to be seen how far the appeal will get in unearthing the truth about the bombing and the parts played by US and UK investigators in securing Megrahi's conviction – by, for example, making huge payments to witnesses, using the deeply dodgy paid CIA informer, Abdul Giaka, by tampering with forensic material and by not disclosing crucial evidence.

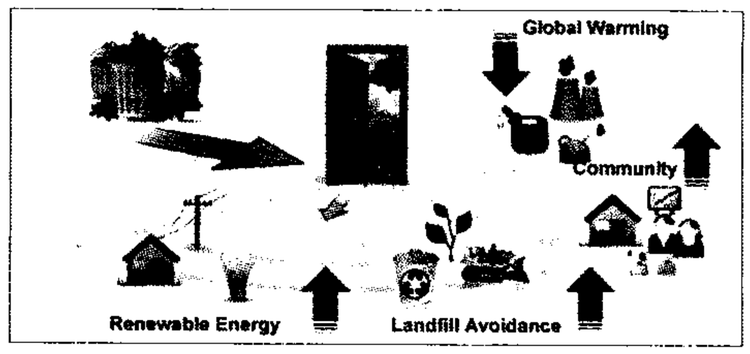
Westminster has already meddled in the appeal by persuading the appeal judges that crucial foreign intelligence evidence relating to the bomb timer, which the Scottish criminal cases review commission (SCCRC) decided was one of six grounds which point to Megrahi's innocence, should remain secret. A special advocate has apparently been given a summary of the material and is expected to weigh its significance "in Megrahi's interest". How someone who is not an expert in international terrorism, has no knowledge of the complexity of the case, its multinational nature or its many anomalies, subtleties and inconsistencies could properly advise Megrahi's lawyers on the basis of a summary, is a mystery. But even as the appeal was about to get underway, Megrahi's legal team was still in the dark.

The appeal is expected to go further than the six grounds set out by the SCRCC. Lawyers will argue that the decision by the original three-judge, no-jury court to convict Megrahi was perverse. For example, the judges rejected large and crucial parts of the crown case – not least that of Giaka, a supposed Libyan defector, known liar and cheat who first put Megrahi in the frame. But they went on to convict him on a mixture of circumstantial evidence and the highly suspect identification evidence of Maltese shopkeeper, Tony Gauci.

Gauci was said to have sold the terrorists the clothes which were packed around the bomb; but as *Eye* readers will be aware, he had been shown photographs of Megrahi before twice formally identifying him: at an ID parade prior to his trial and again while in the dock during the trial. Gauci was paid a handsome reward afterwards.

There is also a new witness who casts more doubt on Gauci's claims. Gauci had initially identified one Abu Talb, who was part of a Syrian-backed terrorist group operating out of Frankfurt, where German police had discovered altitude-sensitive bombs. These were designed to detonate on aircraft, with timing devices triggered to start at 3,000ft and calculated to blow up an aircraft 38 minutes after take-off – spookily just like the Pan Am bomb. The judges refused to allow the defence to produce evidence pointing to the German-based cell as the culprits. This is just one troubling aspect that Megrahi's lawyers are expected to raise over the following weeks and months – *if* Megrahi remains healthy enough for it to be explored.

RENEWABLE ENERGY



Look, no incinerator: the Cyclamax resource park model

Burning questions

QUESTION: When is an incinerator not an incinerator? Answer: When it's a "resource park".

That's the ingenious change of name used by developer Cyclamax to try to damp down opposition to its plan to build giant incinerators on a contaminated former coal works in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, and at another site at Avonmouth, near Bristol.

According to Cyclamax's website, "Sheepbridge Resource Park" in Chesterfield "is a proposal to develop a sustainable business that produces renewable energy, increases recycling, reduces landfill and creates over 100 new engineering and process jobs". It will, the company claims, supply 38 percent of Chesterfield's electricity by "gasifying" waste and make a "14 percent contribution to Derbyshire's renewable energy target".

Apart from its reluctance to use the I-word, another worrying thing about Cyclamax is the identity of its parent company: the cowboy brownfield "remediation" outfit Encia, exposed by the *Eye* nearly four years ago for its misleading "environmental" reports on a proposed Countryside Properties development in Rochdale.

Eye 1139 dismantled Encia's claims that "of particular note is the absence of any asbestos contamination" on the 72-acre site of a former asbestos textile factory, which was in fact riddled with the stuff.

The relationship between Encia and Cyclamax now presents a clear conflict of interest. For Cyclamax has used Encia to complete the "environmental statement" for the contaminated coal works on which it seeks to build in Chesterfield, and has presented it to Derbyshire county council to "prove" that it will be required to do very little cleaning-up on the site before construction begins.

So even though its own report reveals that the ground on which the former coal works stands contains boron, zinc, lead and hydrocarbons, Encia believes there will be "no significant impacts as a result of development". How "green" do you have to be to accept that?

TAX AVOIDANCE

TNT explosives

MORE on the illegal tax avoidance of TNT, the firm likely to scoop up a chunk of Britain's Post Office in Lord Mandelson's proposed part-privatisation.

The *Eye* highlighted in February TNT's admission of illegally avoiding tax, but because the firm settled in private with the Inland Revenue, the exact nature of the fraud remains in the shadows.

However, the *Eye* has since received descriptions of the internal regime at TNT that shine a light on how close TNT's managers were to the tax fraud, and how big the scam was.

The tax avoidance followed the takeover of delivery firm TNT by Dutch postal operator KPN in 1996. KPN used the snappier TNT name for all its postal business after the takeover. In 2004 TNT admitted: "The original financial statements of the company for the years ended 27 December 1997 and 26 December 1998 incorrectly reflected the tax consequences of certain debt and foreign exchange transactions," and submitted revised accounts for 1998 to 2001. It seems TNT staff manipulated exchange rates to create an artificial loss in order to pay less tax, in what TNT itself called "illegal acts".

While TNT insists its bosses were not involved, the current managers were nevertheless important figures in the firm at the time, including Peter Bakker, now chief executive. Indeed, one source told the *Eye* that Bakker was the "deal captain" who managed the TNT takeover.

TNT seemed to have difficulty with its 1996 accounts, which it did not file with Companies House until 1998. Bakker personally signed the 1996 UK accounts, which show a £10m "foreign exchange loss". However, the company has not revised the 1996 accounts, only amending the later reports. The *Eye* asked the auditor, Pricewaterhouse-Coopers, whether it was still confident about the 1996 accounts, but received no response.

Separately, the *Eye* has received a detailed report on the tax fraud commissioned by the Communication Workers Union. According to the report, in 2003 PwC was worried about the failure to submit accounts, and when it investigated it found potentially fraudulent downplaying of profits, and hence of tax owed. Neither PwC nor TNT's tax advisers, KPMG, spotted systemic reporting failures at TNT over the preceding five years.

PwC called in City law firm Dibb Lupton Alsop (DLA), who in turn brought in Ernst & Young to go over the accounts. The DLA/E&Y team, known as "Project Bridge", tried to recreate the firm's accounts, although many records had been destroyed. They found that the fraud extended beyond the British subsidiary into other European arms of TNT. Fees for the two firms ran to around £20m, which gives an idea of the scale of the fraud. The size of the final confidential settlement with the Revenue – around £48m – also suggests this was a very major fraud. However, no board member or senior manager was disciplined for allowing this to happen on their watch, as TNT maintains that only middle managers were responsible.

TNT told the *Eye* the investigation covered "a limited number of items where our interpretation of tax laws and regulations may be open to challenge", and emphasised that an outside, independent investigation showed that the integrity of the board "was not in doubt".

SOUTH WALES POLICE

Party animals

THE CPS has rejected a father's plea to prosecute three men – two of them off-duty police officers – after his 16-year-old son suffered three fractures to his jaw, two broken cheekbones and shattered teeth while being ejected from a party.

Police in south-west Wales were called in last May to investigate an alleged assault on a teenager at a wedding party. Schoolboy Dan Thomas, from Ludchurch, was involved in an altercation at the party and was hit by a youth, but he maintains he sustained his injuries later on while being brutally ejected by the groom and two other men.

Initially no formal statement was taken from him and he was not asked to identify the other men. His parents collected evidence themselves, however, and took his bloodied clothes to the police station for forensic examination.

While Dan was still in hospital undergoing surgery to his broken face, his parents were told that the other 16-year-old, an Irish boy, had admitted the assault and police were planning to caution him. It was only after his father protested that the boy was not in fact responsible for Dan's injuries that some weeks later Dan was interviewed on video. Only his sister was allowed to attend and she maintained there was no attempt to draw information from Dan, as officers indicated they already had the culprit. It was to be another two weeks before the family learned that two of the three men Dan was accusing, including the groom, were off-duty police officers.

When Dan's father, Emlyn, protested that his son's allegations were not being taken seriously because he was accusing policemen, he says he was told the force was considering interviewing his son under caution – for alleged theft of beer at the party. He took that as a threat, enlisted the help of his MP, Nick Ainger, and set out his concerns to the Crown Prosecution Service, which examined the police file on the case and requested further information from them.

But last month, nearly a year down the line, the CPS decided there was insufficient evidence to bring any charge. In a letter to Dan, the CPS said it was relying on his video evidence, in which he apparently said his recollection of events was unclear, but that the men "must have" injured him. This contrasted with his first account at the hospital of being able to identify his attackers. Despite requests from the family, Dan was not re-interviewed.

In fact, the CPS letter seems to reject the claim that he was even brutally ejected from the party, saying that when the groom and best man "let go of you, you fell to the ground and, having been picked up, you fell again. You indicate in your video interview that you were drunk and that may be why your recollection of events is unclear…"

Thus, the CPS has concluded that there is no support for Dan's "view" and that it has no idea how he sustained his injuries. It said that having "thoroughly reviewed" all witness statements and medical evidence it had concluded there was "insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of a conviction against anyone in this case."

Dan's family are now to complain to the overworked Independent Police Complaints Commission, including a request that a separate force be brought in to re-investigate. Watch this space.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

6 hours Time it took Met police to issue press release containing misleading information about death of Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005

4 hours Time it took Met police to issue press release containing misleading information about death of Ian Tomlinson in 2009

SAID BUSINESS SCHOOL

A question of reputation

IN 1996, academics objected to taking money from businessman Wafic Said for a business school at Oxford University (*Eyes passim*) because he had brokered the huge, controversial Al Yamamah Saudi arms deal. Said still attracts controversy: the Electoral Commission is investigating donations to the Conservatives from his family.

But the Said Business School is up and running and has now amusingly founded "an independent research centre which aims to promote a better understanding of the way in which the reputation of corporations and institutions around the world are created, enhanced, and protected".

The executives chosen by the university to advise and teach about "corporate reputation" include:

● **Andy Hornby**, described on the university website as "chief executive of HBOS plc" but now very much the ex-chief executive, having left the bank in disgrace in January after taking it to the brink of destruction.

● Former Financial Services Authority director **John Tiner**, whose FSA regulations allowed banks to make risky investments with little capital, for which we are all now paying.

● Former Coca-Cola spin doctor **Douglas Daft**, who claimed to be investigating murders of Colombian trade unionists in Coke bottling plants but actually hired the lawyers defending Coke against union lawsuits as investigators (*Eye* 1191).

And guess who is a visiting fellow? Yes, you couldn't make it up. It's **Barbara Judge**, of the UK Atomic Energy Authority. See *Eyes passim ad nauseam*.

Meanwhile, the school has also opened a "centre for major programme management", with a major programme defined as "a suite of projects that together approach $1bn in cost and last at least five years". The juiciest of earners for the IT industry, in other words.

So who better to endow it than the telecoms-turned-IT giant, BT? The firm's efforts on the NHS IT contract, as *Eye* readers will recall, are years behind schedule and have forced the company to write off hundreds of millions of pounds so far.

The centre is the brainchild of BT's Patrick O'Connell, president of the "global services" division of BT which runs its big taxpayer-funded contracts and is haemorrhaging cash and credibility. The estimated £4m Oxford endowment should provide some much-needed burnishing to its reputation.

CDC

Tanks for the memory

SAY what you like about CDC, Britain's publicly-owned international development fund (*Eyes passim*), but it knows how to massage its own figures.

Announcing its 2008 results this month, CDC boasted that between 2004 and 2008, it had achieved "average returns of 18 percent per annum". So another great year making money from things like mining, shopping centres and fast food – at the expense of less profitable investments in its traditional sectors such as agriculture? Not quite.

From 2004 to 2007 CDC in fact averaged annual investment returns of 41 percent; but CDC has since admitted that in 2008 its investments actually tanked by around a third. The precise figure is unknown because, unlike in all other years, CDC hasn't published a financial review. Why not? "Because that's what we decided," said a CDC spokeswoman.

A year ago hugely positive returns (of 57 percent) achieved in 2007 were hailed by CDC chief executive Richard Laing as "excellent results" demonstrating "that good financial performance and development impact go hand in hand". Laing (pictured) was awarded bonuses worth three times his salary, taking his total pay to £1m.

Now that profits have tanked, has Laing's pay plummeted too? CDC refuses to say.

The secrecy could perhaps be explained by the imminent publication of a Commons public accounts committee report on 30 April. Labour loyalists on the PAC were looking to water down criticism of the neglect of effective development in favour of profits and huge pay rises (labelled "ridiculous" by Tory PAC chairman Edward Leigh). Nigel Griffiths MP – best known for discussing Ugandan development affairs in his parliamentary office – insisted the "overwhelming success of CDC" should be reflected in the PAC report. Best not mention unflattering details of the latest performance until the report's safely out of the way, then.

YUNUS BAKHSH

Witness protection racket

WHEN black psychiatric nurse and leftie union activist Yunus Bakhsh found evidence suggesting that racists might be behind the anonymous allegations against him of bullying and harassment that led to his being sacked from his job, he believed it was only a matter of time before he would be reinstated.

How wrong he was. Last month, after a week-long hearing before a Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust panel of two – which he described as a Kafkaesque mixture of farce and eastern bloc show trial – his dismissal was upheld.

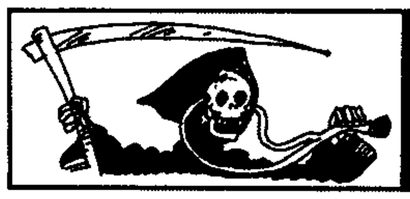
Some witnesses for the trust didn't turn up, but their anonymised and sometimes redacted statements were still accepted; others who did show up were allowed to give evidence anonymously which Bakhsh was then not allowed to test by cross-examination. One was even granted retrospective anonymity, her original statement having identified her.

Everyone, including Bakhsh, knew who the witnesses were. He had been able to identify them all, by a process of elimination, which enabled him to counter some of their evidence by bringing his own witnesses to testify to the same events.

Star witness Kerry Cafferty, who triggered the whole thing with her anonymous statement of bullying and harassment, was conveniently missing. Had she been present she would no doubt have had to answer tricky questions about her Facebook website which linked her to the BNP and some nasty Nazis. She would have had to say whether her contacts were in anyway related to the white supremacist Stormfront website which, ahead of Bakhsh's troubles, had sought "some real and substantiated dirt on this nasty piece of immigrant stock". After he lost both his job and his union role, Stormfront congratulated itself, with one contributor saying: "Revenge is sweet. Well done to those involved," while another rejoiced: "Payback time! Bye Bye Yunus. Job Done!"

Cafferty would also have had to explain why Stormfront activists knew of the allegations Yunus faced not only from his employer but also from Unison, his trade union. Conveniently, however, Cafferty's statement was one the panel didn't let stand in her absence – no doubt because it could then airbrush out this murky background to the case.

Bakhsh learned three weeks ago that his dismissal had been upheld by the panel but is still waiting to hear why. "I think that's because they can't justify it. In all my years as a trade union rep attending innumerable disciplinaries, I have honestly never seen anything like it," he told the *Eye*.



HEALTH CHECK

MEDICINE BALLS

Struck off and die

WHY was whistleblowing nurse Margaret Haywood struck off by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)?

Haywood admitted to breaching patient confidentiality by secretly filming and passing on information about elderly patients at Brighton and Sussex NHS Hospital trust to the BBC *Panorama* team. But given the appalling standards of care she exposed, she could legitimately claim this was in the public interest.

Patients, relatives and staff members had been complaining about lack of basic nursing on Peel and Stewart wards since the summer of 2004, with little effect, and it took the "undercover nurse" documentary to force the trust to act and protect future patients from harm.

No patient or relative complained about Haywood's actions, and the BBC sought the consent of every patient who made the final edit (or their next of kin). Haywood realized from the outset that in passing the tapes to journalists she was in breach of her duty of care but was convinced (probably rightly) that without such a graphic exposure of the failings, nothing was likely to be done.

Breaches of confidentiality are permissible by the NMC (and the public interest disclosure act) in extreme circumstances, such as when patients are suffering significant harm, and although this was undoubtedly the case, Hayward's undoing was the fact that this information was not used urgently to protect the patients she filmed. Filming took place between 3 November 2004 and 5 May 2005, but the programme didn't air until 20 July and very few of the patients featured (some of whom were terminally ill) benefited from their confidentiality being breached.

Haywood was also unable to prove that she might have achieved a similar effect by "going through the correct channels"; but countless NHS whistleblowers would testify to the futility of this route. It was the trust that reported her to the NMC and threw in an absurd allegation that she had failed to assist when a patient had a "grand mal" convulsion. This was found to be groundless by the NMC but the smearing of whistleblowers is a depressingly common tactic used to discredit them (see last *Eye*), and her chances of being listened to as a bank nurse raising concerns internally were close to zero.

Haywood's actions helped to improve nursing care for patients at the trust, and she has the support of many patients and relatives, fellow nurses and even the Royal College of Nursing. In reporting her, the trust may have reduced, or possibly increased, its chances of falling prey to covert filming in future, and has attracted a lot of bad press. How do you explain that a nurse who exposes bad practice is struck off, and yet those who dish it out or oversee it remain in employment?

It is the NMC that comes out of it looking most foolish. The finding of breach of confidentiality was not unexpected, but at 58, and with the stress of a ludicrously protracted investigation that concluded nearly four years after the event, Haywood has no desire to participate in future filming. Besides, her cover is blown. Most nurses believe her bravery has enhanced, rather than harmed, the reputation of nursing. Her nursing record is good and she is not a risk to patients.

The wise option would have been to caution her, but in striking her off the NMC has merely demonstrated how out of touch it is with the nurses it seeks to regulate and the public it claims to serve. Indeed, the backlash has been so strong that the NMC has retreated even further into its self-protective shell. As its website warns: "Abusive or threatening emails and telephone calls to NMC staff will be noted and may be passed to the relevant authorities for further action." Meanwhile, NHS staff will feel even less inclined to speak up about dangerous and substandard care.

M.D.

NHS DATABASE

You've been uploaded

THE government's NHS database grows apace in its so-called pilot areas, despite its legality being cast in doubt by the European Court and, more recently, the Rowntree Trust.

Having blown billions on this IT folly (*Eyes passim*), the government is desperate for it to succeed. In order to get as many names on the database as possible, therefore, it has reversed the usual principles governing consent. Rather than require people to give their explicit consent to be included (as when they sign an organ donor card, say), the government is assuming that "passive" consent – ie failing to refuse to participate – is the same thing as "active" consent and sufficient to justify uploading medical records, often without patients' knowledge.

Most GPs oppose the database; not simply because it's useless, but because they don't trust the government with sensitive personal data given its record of disastrous data protection cock-ups. But in six pilot areas (aka "early adaptors"), the government has already allowed primary care trusts (PCTs) to upload the so-called summary care records (SCRs) of some 248,000 patients – almost certainly without the knowledge of the vast majority.

At one south Birmingham practice, for example, the records of more than 11,000 patients have been put on the database. Only 38 people were canny enough to opt out. To do so, they had to surmount various hurdles. First, they had to go physically to the surgery to get the necessary form, rather than being able to simply download it from the surgery website and fill it in. Then they had to attend a second time to explain their reason to the practice manager. Similar strong-arm practices have been reported in other "early adaptor" areas.

Naturally, the government and its toadies in the pilot areas have relied on public ignorance. Confusing PCT circulars about the database sent to households have clearly been chucked in the bin and a recent BMA survey showed that only one-in-seven people had even heard of the database.

When given full information about the database by wary GPs, virtually no one has allowed their records to be transferred. For example, at the Oaklands practice in east Hampshire, not one of the 11,500 patients have asked for their records to be transferred. Dr Neil Bhatia, the so-called Caldicott Guardian charged with data protection in the area, has decided that only those who give their express consent will have a summary care record on the system. Accordingly, no one did.

The difference between the patients in south Birmingham and east Hampshire seems to be obvious. Those unlucky enough to be in the pilot areas are on the system; those with conscientious GPs scandalised by various government data cock-ups are not.

PS: A final misconception put about by the government is that those patients who decide they don't want an SCR can simply ask for it to be removed from the database. But nothing could be further from the truth. In the small print, it is clear that once an SCR is created on the database, with or without explicit consent, it cannot be removed – only "shielded" from the gaze of Uncle Tom Cobley and all. This is against the data protection act, which allows people to delete personal information held on them, and European Court judgments on the indefinite retention of data.

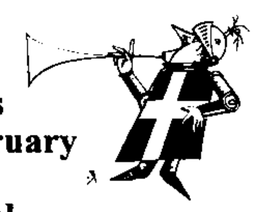
PPS: The government has yet to point to a single case where the NHS database has helped in the treatment of a single patient.

NHS NUMBER CRUNCHING

£2.3bn Cut in health budget from 2011

£12.3bn Budget for botched NHS IT programme

EYE TOLD YOU SO



AND lo it came to pass... As Ratbiter predicted in February (*Eye* 1230), Andrew Way, chief executive of Hampstead's Royal Free Hospital, is moving on after launching a blistering attack on Cerner Millennium's disastrously cumbersome computerized care records service.

Way is going to Australia to run a group of hospitals in Melbourne. Though he told his local newspaper, the *Camden New Journal*, he had always had an ambition to "work and experience health care in another country", the writing was probably on the wall after he put the boot in Cerner Millennium's accursed "healthcare information technology architecture".

Way said that as much as £10m had been wasted and patients had been left untreated while Royal Free staff struggled to make the system work. It "caused our staff so much heartache and hard work," he said – none of which would have won him many friends at the Department of Health, which hired the Cerner outfit.

PFI HOSPITALS

Double trouble

WHY has Edinburgh Royal Infirmary decided to set up temporary operating surgeries in its grounds?

Surely not because the ludicrously expensive private finance initiative-financed hospital doesn't have enough beds?

In addition to the PFI consortium, Lothian health board, which runs the hospital, has been forced to call another for-profit health company, Vanguard Healthcare, to set up two "mobile surgical theatres" so the hospital can reduce its waiting list. Brilliant!

NHS NUMBER CRUNCHING

597 Number of senior UK health managers attending four-day conference in Berlin last month

93 Number of delegates from Germany

£1,208 Cost of registration per person

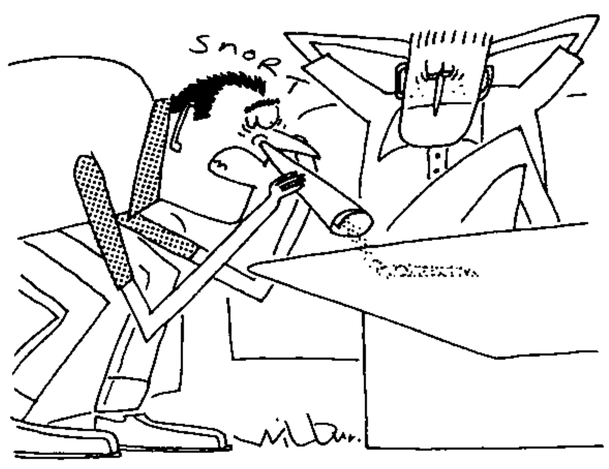
You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk

In the City

SO, WHILE all around him have been losing fortunes in the biggest money maelstrom since the Great Depression and stores and hotels are oozing red, the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed has seen his wealth actually rise by almost £100m.

That is if that "definitive guide", the annual *Sunday Times* Rich List, is to be believed. It says Fayed and his family are now worth £650m compared with £555m a year ago. Well, in the words of the Duke of Wellington, if you believe that you will believe anything – but then the same could and should be said for much of what appears in this annual publication of financial porn.

Certainly the Royal Bank of Scotland and the taxpayer who now controls RBS will be hoping that the estimate is fact, not fiction. RBS has loaned £650m to Fayed family companies secured on the Harrods site and related properties. Despite that loan, the *Sunday Times* bases its valuation of Fayed's wealth on the store being worth £500m. Whether anyone would pay that today is open to question. And if they did, the proceeds would be more than matched by the RBS loan, which is serviced from the much-increased rent now paid by the store, leaving those mortgaged properties as the main Fayed asset.



"Using a P45 is not quite the same as using a twenty..."

But that is not Fayed's only large debt to RBS. The Fayed-owned Paris Ritz hotel owes RBS another €104.6m (£94m), due for repayment on 18 May. Fayed has been seeking to renegotiate this financing since last year, aiming to emerge with a bigger loan – as he did with the Harrods loan in 2006. Then RBS increased its exposure from £348m to £650m on properties at the time valued at just over £700m – a high loan-to-value ratio. But that was in December 2006, when the financial and property worlds were very different places. Which may explain why so far there has been no indication as to whether RBS has agreed to a new and bigger loan to the Ritz, whose interest payable in 2006 and 2007 exceeded its operating profit – and those were good years!

Nor is RBS Fayed's only lender. There is also the similarly taxpayer-owned Bradford & Bingley, which is owed some £50m, and the Fortis and Irish Nationwide Building Society loans at Fulham and Deutsche Postbank in Park Lane. All of which raises questions over the £150m valuation placed on Fayed's other family assets by the *Sunday Times* when the international market for stores, hotels, football clubs and properties – even trophy assets – is in the dumps or un-financeable.

The Irish Nationwide loan to Fulham Football Leisure, which owns the Premier League club, is another example of how Fayed does banking business. In July last year the bank granted a new loan of £9.5m to repay an existing loan of £6m. That £9.5m is due for repayment by July next year. Just why Irish Nationwide, which had been hard hit by Ireland's property crash, was increasing its exposure to a London football club at a time when the financial crisis was already looming remains a mystery. As does how Fayed expects ever to recoup the £174m that family companies have pumped into Fulham by way of loans.

Fulham, like almost everything else in the Fayed empire, is now owned ultimately by a new Bermuda company, Mafco Holdings, which it seems represents family trusts for not just Momo and his two brothers but also their children, as part of a recent reshuffling of the family interests.

ELSEWHERE in the world of wealth, real or imagined, the London *Evening Standard*'s new owner, the somewhat reduced Russian oligarch Alexander Lebedev – "I have no free resources right now", he told the *Financial Times* earlier this month when asked if he wanted to buy the *Independent* – says he is to sue the US business magazine *Forbes* for overestimating his wealth and losses.

Surely this is a first in the fantasy world of rich lists where who has the biggest fortune is the real macho measurement. Lebedev's complaint? They underestimated or ignored his bank debts. Interestingly, the former KGB man does not make it into the latest *Sunday Times* list!

"YOU NEVER know how much a man is worth until you know how much he owes," was the sage comment often made by Fayed's archenemy, the late Lonrho tycoon "Tiny" Rowland, after a lifetime of doing deals. And never has that flaw in the rich list concept been more evident than now.

Compare and contrast the *Sunday Times* Rich List of 2007 – as the property and stock markets reached their post-2000 peaks and before the credit crisis hit later that summer – with the latest version. A remarkable number of names from the 2007 list have simply vanished – and not just from the £100m-or-below minnows such as the late Philip Carter, whose business services group Carter & Carter – also RIP – turned out to be dependent on accountancy illusion.

There may be other reasons for omission – whatever happened to the Aga Khan to remove his Ismaili Highness? – but the main reason is the collapse in asset values. A simple fact of finance is that while property, shares, bonds and currencies may go down, the loan used to buy them does not until repaid.

Here are some of the bigger missing 2007 names… India's **Hinduja brothers**, Sri and Gopi – worth more than £6bn just two years ago. Iranian art collector **David Khalili** – worth almost £6bn just two years ago. **Jim Ratcliffe** of chemical group Ineos – worth £3.3bn in 2007, his "wealth" had supposedly trebled since 2006! Syrian-born property man **Simon Halabi** – £3bn. Iceland's **Thor Bjorgolfsson** was said to be worth more than £2bn – but that was before Iceland and its banks were broke. Fellow Icelanders **Agust and Lydur Gudmundsson** – £1.2bn. Roman Abramovich's right-hand man **Eugene Shvidler** – £1.3bn, before Russia's rich discovered the downside of leverage or excessive borrowing. Scotland's **Sir Tom Hunter** – £1bn, now removed for the curious reason that he has announced his intention to give it all away, or at least what's left after the losses on builders Crest Nicholson, retirement home builders McCarthy & Stone and Wyevale Garden Centres. And that was just among the supposed billionaires.

In the £500m-and-above category, among those now absent are Ukrainian steel trader **Eduard Shifrin**, who was said to be worth £978m in 2007. Don't ya luv those precise numbers! Amnesia sufferer **David Ross**, who overlooked the pledging of his Carphone Warehouse shares to cover property loans – worth £900m no more. Those property-owning brothers **Vincent and Robert Tchenguiz** in their wonderful financial engineering machines – £850m, a figure Robert's bankers in particular would love to believe. American hedge-fund founder **Robert Kauffman** – £800m. Buy-to-let specialist **Andreas Panayiotou** – £715m. Insurance man **Peter Cullum** – £700m. Russian metal trader **Lev Chernoi** – £620m. Iraqi Kurd construction magnate **Shwan al-Mulla** – £500m.

Among the missing who were above £100m in 2007 are Australian TV station owner **Bruce Gordon** – £480m; Norwegian shipowner **Hans Rasmus Astrup** – £250m; Dutch property man **Frank Zweegers** – £250m. Plus a raft of UK property men – **Paul Kemsley**, **Aneel Mussarat**, **Nabeel Mussarat Chowdery**, **Pervaiz Naviede** and **Kevin Linfoot**; fashionista **Leon Max**, website entrepreneur **Nick Denton** and construction duo **Andrew Tinkler** and **William Stobart**. All of these were exciting newcomers to the Rich List in 2007. Now they are gone!

Back in 2007, the rules of engagement for the Rich List stated: "We tend to be cautious and try to give due consideration to liabilities." That had been the mantra in previous years of the post-2000 boom. This year the compilers, headed by Philip Beresford, seem to have belatedly learned their lesson from the previous, less serious recessions of the 80s and 90s. So the 2009 version states: "We have been even more cautious than normal this year in giving due consideration to liabilities. [Really?]… We have been severe in excluding almost all these shares [disclosed as pledged to banks as security for loans] from our consideration of wealth. Similarly, where companies have been involved in talks with banks over debt levels, we have been brutal and removed the owners or large stakeholders until their position is resolved."

A little more brutality in previous years would have saved a great deal of embarrassment. But then rich lists are all about showbusiness rather than finance – that's why Mexican and Colombian drug lords have featured in past *Forbes* lists. The truth is nobody knows whether the figures are correct. But when markets are booming nobody cares. Which is why it will all happen again.

"THIS crisis is attributable to a variety of factors and the major ones are: inappropriate macroeconomic policies of some economies and their unsustainable model of development characterized by prolonged low savings and high consumption; excessive expansion of financial institutions in blind pursuit of profit; lack of self-discipline among financial institutions and rating agencies and the ensuing distortion of risk information and asset pricing; and the failure of financial supervision and regulation to keep up with financial innovations, which allowed the risks of financial derivatives to build and spread."

Which shrewd capitalist commentator gave

☛ *See over...*

"I'll let you guess which one is Dubai"

this right-on-the-money assessment of where we are now? Chinese premier Wen Jiabao at the Davos world economic forum in January.

THE MYSTERY of whether or not Tory benefactor Michael Ashcroft is UK-resident for UK tax purposes may be about to become a little clearer.

By the end of January 2010, the Tory peer and major donor will have to decide whether he needs to pay the new £30,000 annual levy for the tax year that ended on 5 April. This non-dom levy has been designed to catch non-domiciled residents living in the UK. They now have to choose whether to pay UK tax on their worldwide income and gains or opt for the levy and pay only on the money remitted into the UK. This will mainly apply to foreign nationals but will also catch any British citizen who does not have UK domicile for tax purposes.

Ashcroft has both British and Belizean citizenship, as well as effective citizenship from the Turks & Caicos Islands, a Crown dependency. He was for a long time non-resident and, since becoming a peer in 2000, has declined to say whether or not he is UK resident for tax purposes, whether he became so in order to meet the peerage requirement but then ceased to be resident, if so where, if anywhere, he is now resident for tax and whether he has swapped his UK domicile of origin for a domicile of choice elsewhere, such as Belize, TCI or Bermuda.

If Ashcroft is indeed UK-resident for tax purposes, he will not have to pay the £30,000 levy unless he is also a non-dom. A good question to be asked now and in the run-up to the next general election is: does his lordship pay the non-dom £30,000 levy? To which no doubt the Ashcroft reply will be – as always – that these are private matters. But how will Tory leader David Cameron respond to such questions?

DEPOSITORS in Jersey banks are told they can rely on the reputation of local regulators and politicians for competence and integrity. What, then, to make of the fiasco surrounding the £106m energy-from-waste incinerator project whose cost may rise by up to £10m because the euro-bill was not "hedged" against a fall in sterling?

Furthermore, it seems that as much as £4m may have been spent without the necessary approval. Chief minister Terry Le Sueur is to be summoned this week to explain – he agreed the euro contract when he was Treasury minister – while inquiries continue into the actions of senior civil servants.

Officials claim they knew nothing about "hedging" so they sought advice from Royal London Asset Management. However, RLAM says it was never asked to advise on the currency risk. The words tin pot and toy town come to mind as well as tax haven.

'Slicker'

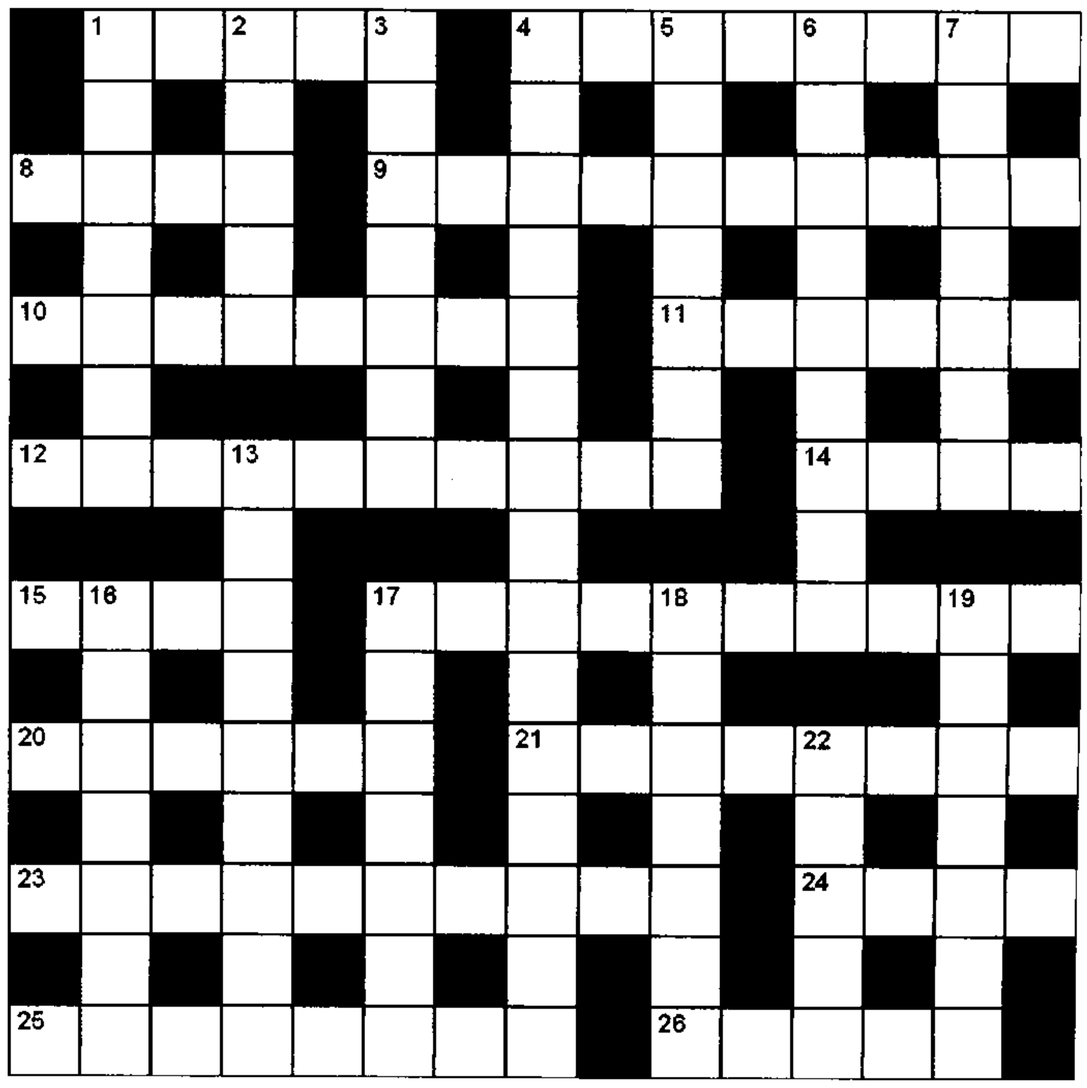
NUMBER CRUNCHING

5.3m Workers adversely affected by the government's abolition of the 10% tax rate in 2007 budget

0.3m Workers adversely affected by the government's introduction of the 50% tax rate in 2009 budget

EYE CROSSWORD 390

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 8 May 2009

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1 Maybe the elder Bush pissed about end of war (5)
4 Drop behind someone in a hurry (8)
8 Head of shit face follower of 'WH' in *Private Eye* (4)
9 Work situation required for Labour after next general election? (10)
10 Oxford protector possibly needs lots of balls and a garden implement (8)
11 Some pint-size nit has climax (6)
12 Underwear (reversed) Ms Hurley put on bollocks, which get crushed (6,4)
14 Subprime finally ballsed up our money (4)
15 Fruity thing's unattractive broadcast (4)
17 Strict control about to be imposed on Fleet Street gets no one's backing (10)
20 Endlessly stuff working woman who's repulsive (6)
21 Defeatist, pissed, go native, getting drug for nothing (8)
23 A favourite party political activity, if gin drunk with thing out (10)
24 Spike, getting end away: "God!" (4)
25 Brown: "Have to go with three pisspoor northern union colleagues" (8)
26 Gordon's guts turned over – 'e's acquired start of spending habit (5)

DOWN

1 Jetsam ovaries? Shows contribution of little boiler (7)
2 Shag's a jolly flier? (5)
3 Not a reputable place, making one of 25 swap political sides (7)
4 Maybe outgoing banker's enhanced reward executed: "on a high – getting holiday place abroad!" (6-2,7)
5 Court prat embraces what's not supposed to matter (7)
6 People at a meeting, possibly climax with ecstasy in disgusting state (9)
7 Grade and Brenda hosting *Name the Drug-taker* (7)
13 Get i.e. 'rocks' covered with popped zits – that's the spirit! (9)
16 Party deserting Gordon "are awful," he whimpers (7)
17 Also-ran Cherie hugs man with beastly spread? (7)
18 Good time to penetrate butt, being tied up (7)
19 Obama's openings against debts hardly a surprise (7)
22 10% boob man (5)

Crossword 389 winner: SHEILA HARDY

ACROSS: 8 Privates 9 Summit 10 Medicine Balls 11 Fossil 12 Eye-drops 14 Hillary 16 Smasher 19 Stuffing 21 Sordid 23 Power struggle 24 Joints 25 Interact.

DOWN: 1 Trombonist 2 Evades 3 Stickler 4 Asunder 5 Usable 6 Implores 7/23 Pisspoor 13 Presidency 15 Left wing 17 Misquote 18 Ego trip 20 Inrush 22 Regard.

HUSBAND

I don't believe it! They've dropped the bleedin' keeper...
FOOTBALL NEWS
..He's not even on the bastard bench!!..
So?
FOOTBALL NEWS
So, I was going to rob his house tonight

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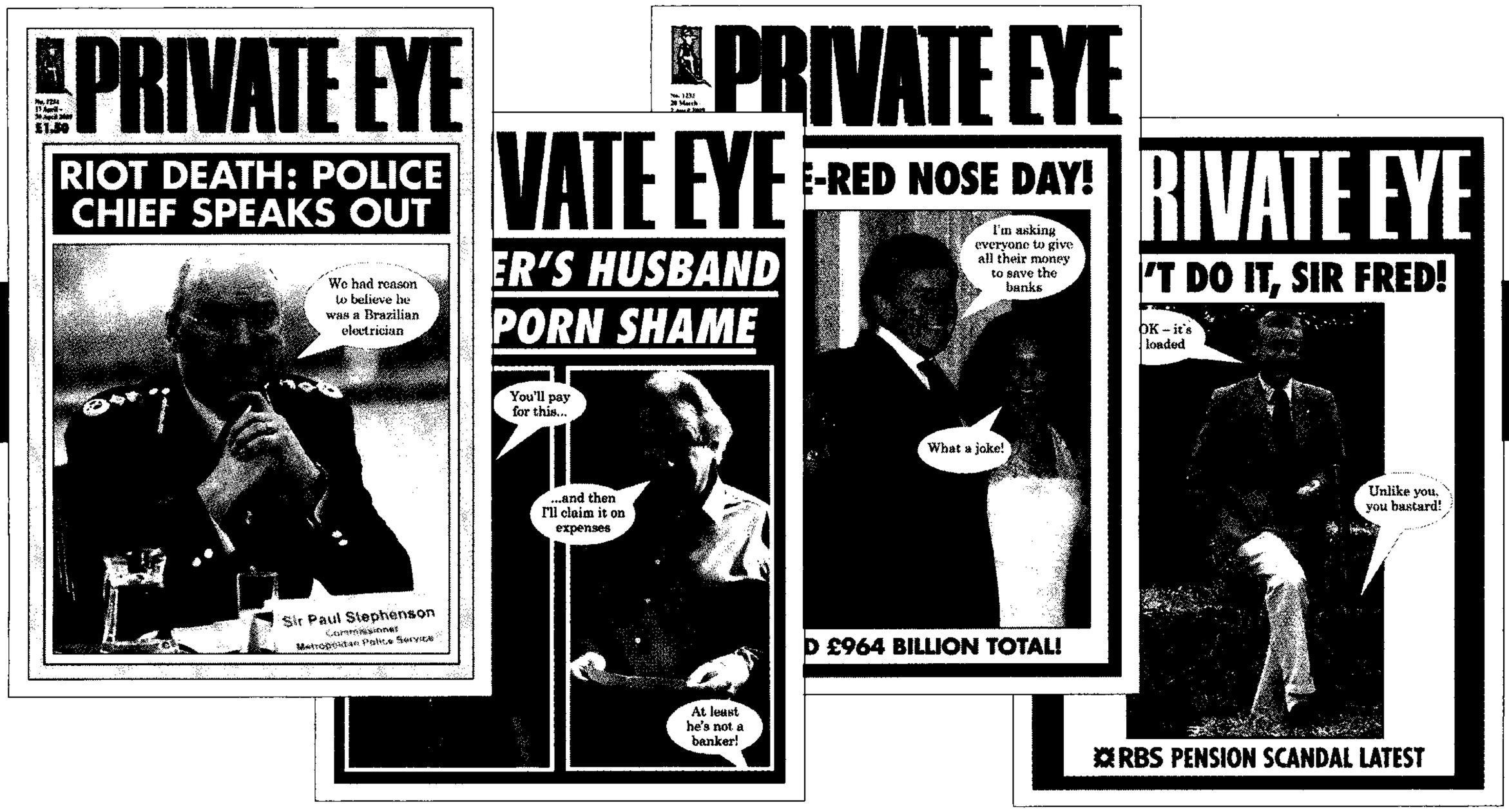
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RIOT DEATH: POLICE CHIEF SPEAKS OUT
We had reason to believe he was a Brazilian electrician
Sir Paul Stephenson
Commissioner
Metropolitan Police Service
PRIVATE EYE
ER'S HUSBAND
PORN SHAME
You'll pay for this...
...and then I'll claim it on expenses
At least he's not a banker!
PRIVATE EYE
E-RED NOSE DAY!
I'm asking everyone to give all their money to save the banks
What a joke!
D £964 BILLION TOTAL!
RIVATE EYE
'T DO IT, SIR FRED!
OK – it's loaded
Unlike you, you bastard!
RBS PENSION SCANDAL LATEST

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OM SAI RAM

Don't join the recession – beat it!

Looking 'the business' more important now than ever, says bespoke tailoring king.

It's the question every professional man and woman on the planet is asking right now; what is the best way to present yourself when doom and gloom are in a neck and neck race for world domination?

More specifically, just how 2009 is sackcloth and ashes as a businesswear look? Read the media in anywhere in the world, and you could only conclude that with the way things are going, the hair shirt, preferably with worn-out shoes and a frayed collar will be only appropriate fashion for the coming year.

But Hong Kong's pre-eminent master tailor Raja Daswani, the man now hailed globally as the world's leading authority on the smart, perfectly fitting, exquisitely-made – yet amply affordable - suit, begs to differ. 'Dressing for success has never been more important than in these days of recession and depression,' he says.

'An immaculate suit practically hypnotises people,' explains the man whose passion for fashion has transformed the wardrobes – and the lives - of hundreds of thousands of men and women worldwide. 'Without making its point loudly or brashly, a fine suit argues with unswervable conviction that its wearer is supremely competent, totally in control and has impeccable taste.'

'These above all are the qualities you need to prosper in these difficult times. You look good, feel good, be good and, ultimately, do good.'

'A good, hand-made bespoke suit is as effective as a superb c.v. at giving a good impression. A perfect suit makes your point for you, but subtly. Nobody is resistant to the message a great suit conveys.'

'The effect – some even call it the Raja magic suit effect - is strangely contagious,' he continues.

'People are drawn to well presented people. By contrast, sadly, nobody likes to do business with or associate with people who look like a walking recession. I think there's a feeling that it's catching.'

'I am so convinced by my decades of experience of making fantastic suits at a crazily low price that I virtually guarantee a Raja suit will change your life for the better,' Mr. Daswani concludes.

And because he wants more people to look good and do good in today's challenging world, Mr Daswani's suit empire, Raja Fashions, is pitching into the recession with a couple of incredible offers.

It's not just the unbeatable price of a Raja Fashions suit. (We are talking £169 for a fully made-to-measure summer suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £325 for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand-finished suit in a British or Italian cloth, with every refinement from hand-made buttonholes to knee lining, exotic jacket linings and double thickness pockets.) Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500, costs a third less than it would on Savile Row.

But first off in Mr Daswani's Recession Special Package, he is offering one free hand made-to-measure shirt free with every suit you purchase.

Secondly, special for 2009, he is pledging to give a proportion of the (already amazing) price of each custom-cut, hand-stitched suit he sells to charity.

While you are very welcome to make your way to bustling Cameron Road, Kowloon to visit Raja Fashions' store, the store will equally come to you – in cities all over the world, several times a year. Thanks to the magic of technology, Mr Daswani and his team can measure you up for the full Hong Kong Monty without your needing to travel often further than your nearest big city. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 10,000 miles away before you've even left his mobile sales suite. You can have it sent by courier within a week or so if it's urgent – or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

Over the past thirty soaringly successful years, the Raja suit revolution, with its inspired mix artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, has practically seen off the traditional, ill fitting, robot-finished off the peg British high street suit.

Whether you're attracted by quality, style, price, or sheer convenience, a Raja Fashions suit is the perfect a sartorial solution to tough times.

But be warned. Mr Daswani doesn't do sackcloth.

Or ashes.

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London	**Hilton London Tower Bridge**	**Cardiff**	**Cardiff Hilton Hotel**	**Oxford**	**Old Bank Hotel**
May 4-5	5 More London Place, SE1 2BY	May 14-15	Kingsway, Cardiff, CF10 3HH	May 10-11	92-94 High Street, OX1 4BA
London	**Hilton Paddington Hotel**	**Dublin**	**Dublin Four Seasons Hotel**	**Reading**	**Penta Hotel**
May 6-10	146 Praed Street, W2 1EE	May 14-17	Simmonscourt Road, Dublin 4	May 6-7	Oxford Road, RG1 7RH
London	**Four Seasons Hotel**	**Heathrow**	**Sheraton Heathrow**	**Southampton**	**Hilton Southampton**
May 11-12	46 Westferry Circus, E14 8RS	Apr 27-28	Heathrow Airport, UB7 0HJ	May 8-9	Bracken Place, SO16 3RB
Belfast	**Holiday Inn**	**Leeds**	**Leeds City Hilton**		
May 12	22 Ormeau Avenue, BT2 8HS	Apr 26-27	Neville Street Leeds, LS1 4BX	**EURO**	
Birmingham	**Hyatt Regency Birmingham**	**Manchester**	**Renaissance Manchester Hotel**	**Belgium**	**Conrad Brussels**
Apr 30-May 1	2 Bridge Street, B1 2JZ	Apr 28-29	Blackfriars Street, M3 2EQ	May 9-10	Avenue Louise 71, Belgium 1050
Brighton	**Hilton Brighton Metropole Hotel**	**Newcastle**	**Hilton Newcastle Gateshead**	**Switzerland**	**Four Seasons Hotel Geneva**
May 4-5	Kings Road, East Sussex, BN1 2FU	Apr 24-25	Bottle Bank, NE8 2AR	May 3-4	Quai des Bergues 33, Geneva 1201
Bristol	**Bristol Marriott Hotel**	**Northampton**	**Northampton Marriott**	**Switzerland**	**Zurich Marriott Hotel**
May 12-13	2 Lower Castle Street, BS1 3AD	Apr 29-30	Eagle Drive, NN4 7HW	May 6-7	Neumuehlequai 42, Zurich 8006

Details of our up and coming tours can be found on www.raja-fashions.com

FLAGELLATION, BEHEADING AND CRUCIFIXION. (THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A MARTIN RANDALL CRUISE FOR CONCENTRATING THE MIND.)

IN Pursuit Of Caravaggio is a cruise devoted to the dramatic life and work of one of the most colourful figures in the history of Italian art.

His pictures were innovative and shocking; his personality was tempestuous and violent. He painted religious images of unmatched sensuousness and sublimity – and yet he was wanted for murder, fleeing to Naples, Malta and Sicily to evade arrest.

This voyage visits all the main places in which Caravaggio worked, retraces his journeys and enables unhurried viewing of many of his finest paintings.

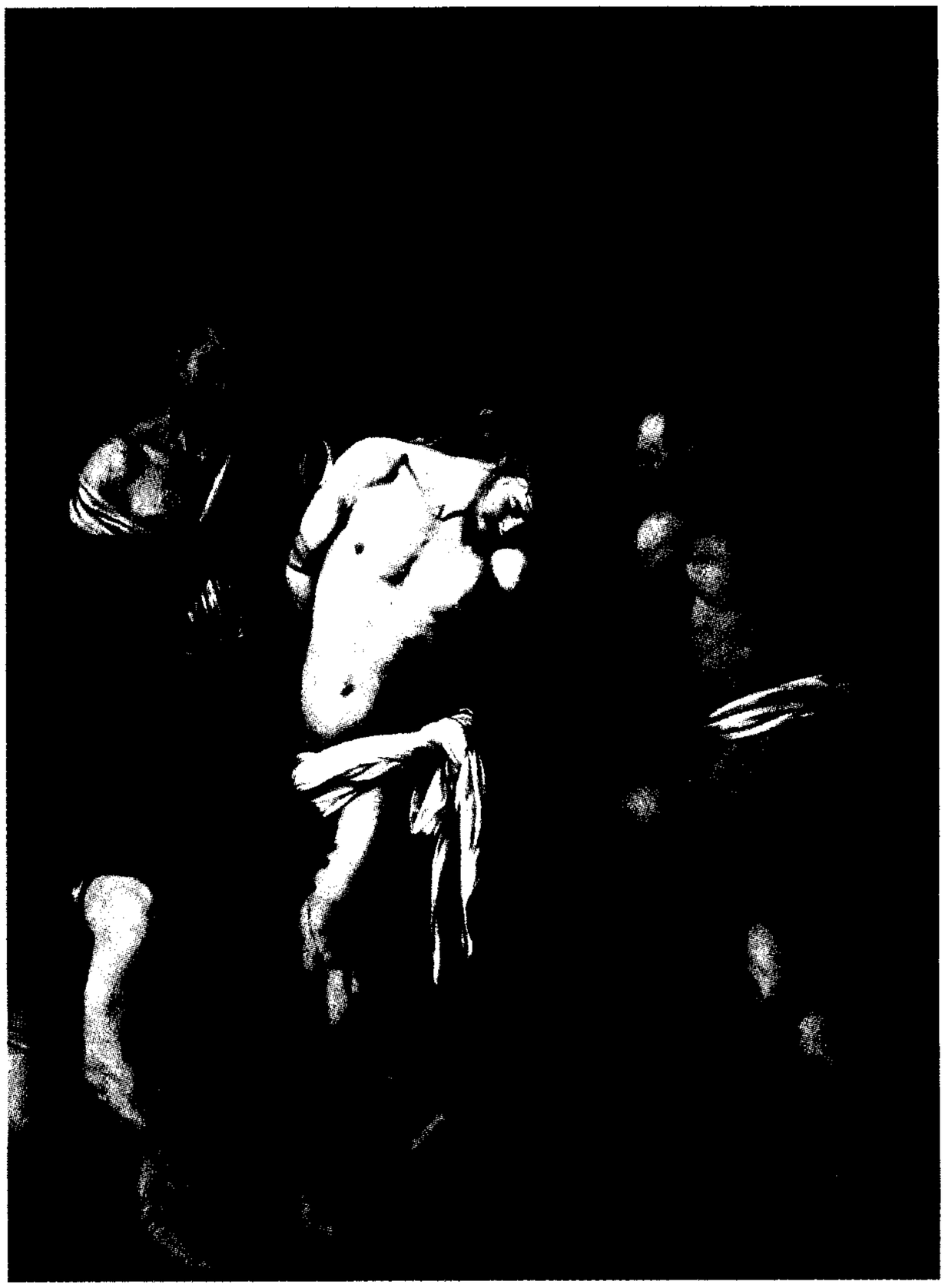
His eventful life is mirrored in the itinerary, which is similarly packed with interest of a non-painterly hue. As befits an artist prone to spectacular eruptions, for example, there are opportunities to view three live volcanoes: Vesuvius, Etna and Strómboli.

There are visits too to see the glorious Doric temples of Magna Graecia, along with optional excursions to the Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum. And finally, there are private concerts throughout the journey, all in magnificent and highly appropriate settings, all with some of the very best Baroque musicians in Europe.

So although the focus on a single artist may be unusual for a cruise of this kind, it should provide a chance to sharpen one's appreciation of the glories of art and architecture in southern Italy.

Central to the whole venture are the lecturers, who are selected not merely for their erudition, but also for their ability to enthral with insight, analysis and narrative. (On this cruise you will be accompanied by an art historian, a classicist, an historian and a vulcanologist.) Their talks will take place both ashore and on board.

Talking of which, the vessel we sail on is small but extremely well-appointed. You'll be delighted to find no casino, no disco, no cabaret and definitely no piped music. Bars remain open till the early hours, but the main source of evening entertainment is conversation with your lecturers and like-minded travellers.



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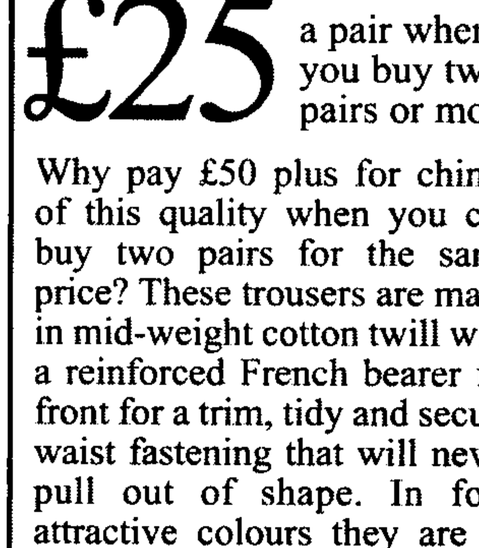

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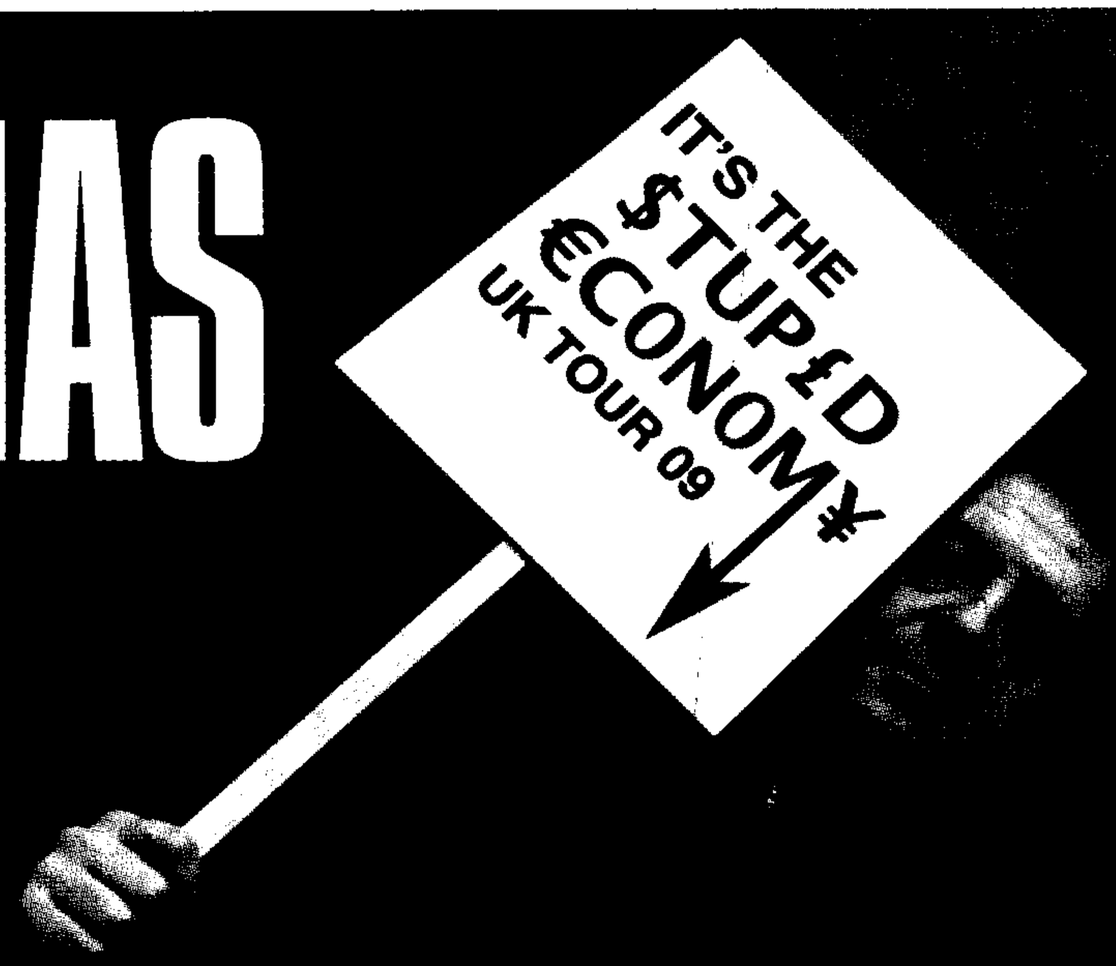

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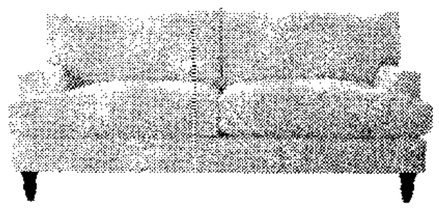

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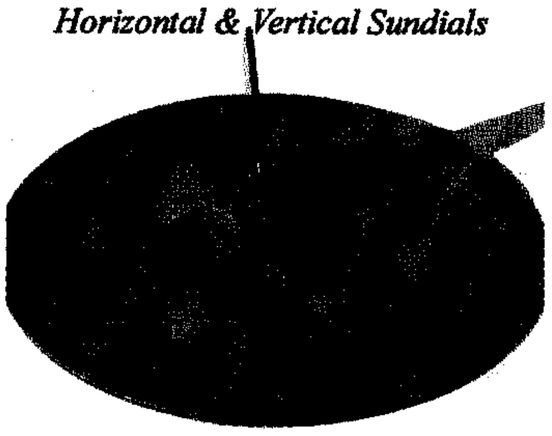

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